



Prairie Dogs

Nature's cute burrowing rodents

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General Information

- Prairie dogs are in the family Sciuridae, containing squirrels, chipmunks and marmots
- Their native habitat ranges from the great plains, north to Canada and south to Mexico
- They can weigh up to 3 pounds and are about 14-17 inches long
- They live in families of about 12 for every 1.5 acres



Habitat and Behavior

- Within the grasslands, prairie dogs spend most of the day above ground foraging for their food: native grasses, flowers and seeds
- They use their burrows as a home to escape bad weather and predators.
 - Predators include snakes, foxes, coyotes, and various birds of prey
- The burrows also act as nurseries for the pregnant mothers in the group
- Prairie dogs are very social animals. They greet using hugging, kissing, and touching noses.



Social Structure

- Prairie dogs live in communities called “Towns”
- Each prairie dog within a family is given one of the following jobs to help maintain their home
 - Foraging
 - gathering food (leafy greens)
 - Interacting with others
 - mothering young
 - communication with other families
 - Maintenance of the burrow
 - digging out the burrows for more space
 - removing unwanted waste from the burrow
 - Watching for predators
 - These “Scouts” will use a series of calls or clicks to warn the others of potential predators and whether the predator is entering or leaving the area



Problems Facing Prairie Dogs

- Prairie dogs are viewed as a nuisance by farmers and ranchers who say that they are destructive to their crop and can cause physical harm to livestock by digging burrows on the property where cattle and other livestock feed.
- According to the humane society, there are ways to keeping the animals off the property without resorting to chemicals, such as:
 - Plant tall sturdy plants
 - Modify the landscape
 - Use wire mesh underground to prevent digging
 - Tolerate predators on the property

How do prairie dogs affect the soil?

- Prairie dogs play a key role in the health of the soil
- Prairie dogs affect the health of the soil by simply digging out their burrows. This allows for the aeration of the soil.
- They also fertilize the soil in their environment, allowing for seeds to germinate more effectively.



Reference Page

- <https://defenders.org/wildlife/prairie-dog>
- <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/black-tailed-prairie-dog>
- <https://forum.americanexpedition.us/prairie-dog-facts-photos-and-information#info>
- <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/what-do-about-prairie-dogs>