

# Animals of the Black Hills

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## Prairie Dog





Prairie dogs live in large groups called “towns” that are made up of multiple burrows. Prairie dogs use their strong, short limbs and long, sharp toenails to dig and maintain their burrows. They use their hearing and great eyesight to look for their many predators. Teamwork is an important part of being a prairie dog, including a complex warning system to alert others.

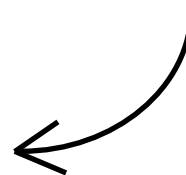


A single family can have over 50 burrow entrances and exits in their part of a town! The entrance mounds create a lookout point for prairie dogs and also keep rain and melting snow from flooding the burrow.

Prairie dogs will usually eat small plants like grasses or shrubs, but may munch on insects from time to time. Prairie dogs vary their diet, so they aren't reliant on a single plant for survival. By using the vegetation around their towns, prairie dogs are able to see predators like coyotes or foxes more easily.



This prairie dog is likely gathering materials for the nursery compartment of the burrow. Prairie dogs also have separate areas for feeding and sleeping. Burrows can easily stretch over 20 feet from entrance to compartment and over 10 feet under the surface depending on the type of soil!





As the winter approaches, prairie dogs eat more and more food to fatten up for the colder season. Although they fatten up, prairie dogs don't fully hibernate. Instead, they have incomplete hibernation! Prairie dogs become less active and eat less during the winter. They may sleep for many days at a time, but prairie dogs, like the ones pictured here, are usually active during the milder days of the winter.



**Winter Challenge:**

**How does your animal solve this challenge?**

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