

# Wee meerkats at Edinburgh Zoo



Here's your Friday cue to go awww...

Edinburgh Zoo has announced the birth of three baby meerkat pups this morning and here they are.

The lively bunch have joined the troop of meerkats at Meerkat Plaza and have started to venture outside the safety of the burrow and are slowly learning the ropes.

Andrew Laing, Carnivore Keeper at Edinburgh Zoo, said:

"The meerkats are always a favourite with our visitors, so it's wonderful to see some new additions to the group. At only four weeks old the pups are settling in well and their individual personalities are starting to show.

"Mum Queen and dad Ace are doing really well and are getting plenty of help from other members of the group to raise the pups as meerkats are actually cooperative breeders, which means that all adults within the group will help to care for the young.

"Meerkats have a gestation period of around 11 weeks, so we didn't have long to wait for them to arrive, but for the first three weeks of life they stay in the burrow being looked after by the adults. At around four weeks old they will start to explore outside of the den. It's good to see them out and about learning how to catch their own food."



Meerkats are the most well-known member of the mongoose family. They inhabit dry, open areas with short grass and sparse woody scrub mainly in southern Africa.

In April 2014 Edinburgh Zoo unveiled its new meerkat enclosure, Meerkat Plaza, with the help of legendary Edinburgh author Alexander McCall Smith. The dynamic new enclosure is

located at the entrance to the Zoo and features sanded areas for digging, large rock features, caves, heat pads and a meerkat house. Visitors can come face to face with the charismatic creatures with 20 metres of glass panelling running along the front.

As part of the development, the front entrance also includes a large welcome plaza, with 'where to go' signage to allow visitors to orientate themselves before starting their day at the Zoo. Four large wooden meerkat benches featuring hand-crafted meerkat carvings, created by a local chainsaw artist Iain Chalmers take pride of place in the middle of the plaza.