A Guide to the Care and Husbandry of the Black-tailed Prairie Dog
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Biological Facts:
- Life span: 7-12 years
- Adult body weight: 0.5-2.2 kg (1-5 lbs.)
- Sexual maturity: 2-3 years

Behavior:
- Most prairie dogs are wild caught in the spring
- Prairie dogs are diurnal (active during the day)
- They do not hibernate but may become less active for several days in cold weather
- “Bark” when excited, alarmed, or as a greeting
- Very social animals, need lots of attention. Greet each other with wide open mouth
- Like to climb, but are very clumsy and fall easily
- Need lots of deep bedding for digging
- Can become aggressive during mating season if not altered

Diet:
- Unlimited timothy grass hay, Briskeys Accufeed Prairie dog diet, Oxbow Prairie Delight, Rodent chow. DO NOT feed monkey chow or dog food.
- Alfalfa cubes may be added to the diet of young prairie dogs, but should be decreased as they age to prevent obesity
- Occasional fresh fruit and vegetables, seeds and nuts can be offered as treats
- Large sipper bottle of clean fresh water, change frequently

Housing:
- Large rodent/rabbit enclosure, provide some solid flooring if wire mesh floor
- Deep bedding for digging (aspen shavings, recycled paper bedding, pellets)
- Tunnels, boxes for hiding, toys
- Chinchilla dust to “bathe” in
- Temperature 69-72 F, 30-70% humidity

Preventive Care: (The key to a healthy prairie dog!)
- Bi-annual physical examinations, including dental, and fecal analysis. Blood tests as needed.
- Nail trimming
- Spay/neuter (best before 12 months old, in May through October)
- No vaccinations required

Common Medical Conditions Requiring Veterinary Attention:
- Dental problems (malocclusion, odontoma)
- Obesity
- Respiratory problems
- Trauma/fractures
- Heart disease, skin problems, liver problems also seen but less common.