

Natural Inquirer Reader Series

Number 6

Grades K–2

Word Count: 794

Genre: Nonfiction

For more information on Dr. Ford's research, read "Prairie Dog Days" in the "Animals and Ecosystems of the Southwestern United States" Investi-gator, <http://www.naturalinquirer.org>.

Note: For more background information and a lesson plan, visit <http://www.naturalinquirer.org> and click on "Natural Inquirer Reader Series."

Background Information: Dr. Ford and Ms. Archuleta's research focused on prairie dog habitat. The scientists wanted to know how fire might affect prairie dog habitat. Scientists were interested in this information because prairie dogs are an important component of the ecosystem. Prairie dogs help aerate the soil, their scat provides nitrogen for the soil, and several predators rely on the prairie dog as a food source. One particular predator, the black-footed ferret, is an endangered species. Due to the importance of the prairie dogs in the ecosystem, the scientists were concerned with learning more about the habitat of the prairie dog and what things improve prairie dog habitat. In this reader, students are challenged to think about studying animals and the animal's habitat. For information on additional prairie dog research conducted by Dr. Ford, read "Prairie Dog Days" in the Animals and Ecosystems of the Southwestern United States Investi-gator, <http://www.naturalinquirer.org/investigator-i-42.html>

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