

## **Welcome to Meerkats! How does your Group get started?**

The Meerkat programme is designed to provide a growth and development opportunity for young people in South Africa, who are 5 and 6 years old. It is based on the Scout Method, with material relevant to the age and education level.

### **1. Establishing a Meerkat Den in your Group**

Before starting a Meerkat Den in your Group, your Scout Group Leader (SGL) and Group Committee must understand the implications and agree to start a Den, as a new unit within your Group. Then you need to find a person who will be trained as a Den Scouter.

If they are not a member the normal AAM process, and investiture, must be followed, see Section 2.3

The member can then attend training or apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), for at least Stage 1 (IAL). Once they have been issued, with at least a Limited Warrant, see section 2.3 your application to Register the new Meerkat Den, as a Unit in your Group, can be approved by your District and Region.

To get help, contact your Regional Team Co-ordinator (RTC) Meerkats or, in Regions where there isn't yet an RTC, contact the Regional Commissioner who can get help from the Chair: National Meerkat Programme, Craig Rens.

### **2. Adult Resources**

It is essential that all adults and youth working with Meerkats have the aptitude and personality for working with pre-school children. They also need to be willing to learn, so they can use the programme to provide an exciting and attractive activities for the growth and development of five and six year olds.

New leaders will probably be recruited predominantly from the parents, but maybe there will also be Scouters, past or present, who wish to work with that age group.

#### **2.1 Adult Roles required for a Den**

Warranted Den Roles:

- Den Scouter
- Assistant Den Scouter

Non-Warranted Den Roles:

- Den Helpers: Parents/grandparents or legal guardians, who should become Members of SSA.
- Parent Helpers: Only parents, legal guardians or grandparents, who assist from time to time.

- Meerkat Instructors: Any Scout or Guide over the age of 14 years, who holds the Discoverer Badge or Guide equivalent, can assist in this role under the supervision of the warranted Den Scouter.

## **2.2 The Group's Role**

Where a Den is created in a community Scout Group, the Den will fall under the SGL and the Committee of that Group as for any other unit. For a school, church or NGO Group, the responsibilities are set out in the Organisational Rules (OR).

Where a stand-alone Den is formed, it will be the only unit in that new Group and will need a Committee to support the Den and look after the finances. It will also, ideally, have an SGL to assist the Den Scouter. Alternatively, the Den Scouter could act as SGL until a suitable Scouter can be recruited as SGL.

It is important that any stand-alone Den makes suitable arrangements for their Meerkats who turn 7 years old, to join a suitable Cub Pack.

## **2.3 Recruitment and Verification Process for Adults**

Scouters and Adults supporting the programme need to be members of SSA and will have to:

- Complete an AAM form, if they are not already members, references to be vetted by the SGL and District Warrants Committee.
- Supply a copy of their ID book and a recent Police Clearance Certificate (less than a year old), which will be checked and filed with the AAM form.
- The SGL or DC must then load the member's details and ID book onto Scouts Digital, our National Data Base, with the role "Parent Helper".
- SSA will then complete the necessary checks for adults working with youth with the Department of Social Development.
- The new adult can be invested as Member of SSA and their status changed to "Den Helper", on Scouts Digital,
- When the prospective Den Scouter has completed the Stage 1 Training (taking account of the RPL which has been recognised) they can following the established process in the Adult Support Policy: complete a Role Application form (RALA Part 1) and be interviewed for the position, as would any Scouter.
- If accepted for the role, they can then be issued with a Warrant.

## **3. Recognition of Pilot Dens**

A number of pilot Dens have been operating for some time and several are in the process of registering.

It is important that all Pilot Dens do now register as units in existing Groups. All registered Dens will be able to make use of the existing support structures in the Group, District, Region and National structures.

## **4. Adult Training**

### **4.1 Training for Meerkat Leaders**

The Aim is to provide a progressive training system that will take a new Adult Leader through the process of understanding the Aims and Principles of Scouting; the "What"; through the "How" to plan and run fun and effective meetings and finally the "Why" we do what we do, i.e. they will follow the same elements as all other Scouters.

### **4.2 Stage 1 Training (IAL)**

Stage 1 training covers the "What is Scouting" and what does a Meerkat meeting look like. It is aimed at the new Leader entering Scouting for the first time. The training gives a new Leader enough knowledge and skills to be able to start a new Den, implement the programme and run fun meetings at the regular meeting place using Programmes on a Plate (PoP) which have been prepared by experienced Leaders.

All Den Scouters will have to complete the Meerkat Stage 1 Training, but RPL will be given. The RPL will take account of any IAL, Cub Warrant or Cub Wood Badge Training they have been completed in the last 5 years. Any experience they have gained while developing the Meerkat programme for SSA, working in "Pilot" Dens or in ECD centres will also be evaluated.

For experienced Scouters a short "IAL conversion course" is available for those who have completed IAL, Cub Warrant or Cub Wood Badge in the last 5 years.

The first Regions plan to run these from November 2019, so please contact your RTC: Adult Leader Training if you are interested.

Once the proposed Den Scouters have completed the Stage 1 Training, they will go through the normal process to become warranted as Den Scouters, and SSA can then register their Dens as additional units in the existing Groups.

### **4.3 Additional skills training**

It is proposed that once a year a one day Meerkat skills course is offered by the training teams in the Regions. This will give the Scouters a chance to learn new skills, meet each other and exchange ideas. It should ideally be completed before the Stage 2 Training, but initially that may not be possible.

#### **4.4 Stage 2 Training – Warrant Course**

As a pre-requisite to attending Warrant Training the member has to have completed an IAL course, with Meerkat Modules (or done the conversion Course) and taking account of their RPL.

Stage 2 covers the “How to run Meerkats”. The Cub Stage 2 Warrant Training has been used as a framework to structure the Meerkat Stage 2 Warrant Training material and courses. There are many similarities and some joint training sessions with the new Cub Leaders are envisaged until there is sufficient demand to run standalone courses. This training will equip the leader to:

- Run effective and fun meetings.
- Help the Meerkats to develop and advance.
- Plan age appropriate meeting programmes using an Early Childhood Development framework.
- Plan quarterly programmes.
- Plan and run fun outings.
- Maintain appropriate Den records.

RPL will take account of other Warrant courses attended, when they were completed as well as experience in working in pilot Dens and in an Early Childhood Development environment.

In the first quarter of 2020, a conversion course will be available for current Warranted Pack Scouters who wish to work in a Meerkat Den. This will consist of the Meerkat specific modules on Meerkat meetings and advancement programmes and selected modules from the Meerkat Warrant covering early childhood development etc. This will probably amount to about 4 – 6 hours of training. It is being developed in parallel with the development of the Meerkat Warrant course and will be offered in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape in the first half of 2020, depending on demand. Please contact your RTC: Adult leader training if you are interested.

#### **4.5 First Aid Training**

At least Level 1 First Aid training is a recommended requirement for all Den Scouters.

#### **4.6 Stage 3 Training – Wood Badge**

As a pre-requisite the member will have to have completed their Meerkat Warrant Course and served as Den or Assistant Den Scouter for at least 18 Months since completing their Stage 2 Training. Meerkat Wood Badge training is not expected to be available until 2021.

#### **4.7 Other courses**

Any Den Scouter planning or taking responsibility for any activity involving swimming or any activities around water bodies, will need to have completed the Water Awareness course. The content of the Water Awareness course will be reviewed to include any special consideration of the Meerkat activities.

## **5. Stages of Training Stages and Responsibilities that can be accepted**

### **5.1 Stage 1: IAL Training**

Having completed this training, the member would be eligible for Limited Warrant, valid for a maximum of 18 Months, as Den or Assistant Den Scouter and be entitled to operate a Den, but only in its normal meeting place.

### **5.2 Stage 2: Warrant Training**

Having completed this training, the member will be eligible for a full Warrant as Den or Assistant Den Scouter valid for a maximum of 5 years. They will be able to take responsibility for all Den activities.

## **6. Roll out to private, pre-school and Early Childhood Development Centres**

It is the intention of SSA to roll out the Meerkat programme to these centres once it has been rolled out satisfactorily in Groups in several Region in. This will be started in 2020.

## **7. Available resources**

**The Meerkat Trail and Meerkat Badge Book are available on the SSA website.**

The Den Scouters Working Kit is in Draft form and several Modules will be available by the end of October 2019.

The Scout Shop will have stock of the new style Meerkat badges from the beginning of 2020, but Pilot Dens can continue to purchase the older style badges from Compass Craft until the end of 2019.

## **8. Questions?**

If you have questions please ask your RTC: Meerkat programme, or Regional Commissioner. Craig Rens the Chair: National Meerkat Programme is available to assist them.