

What is a Dingo?

The Dingo is Australia's Native Dog.

What are the origins of the Dingo?

The origins of the Dingo are obscure. It is thought to have arrived in Australia between 3,500 and 4,000 years ago. The oldest Dingo fossil found has been carbon dated at 3,450 years old - the approximate era at which rock engravings of Dingoes also appear in Aboriginal art. Dingoes have never been on Tasmania, which separated from the mainland some 10,000 years ago.

The Dingo is thought to be a descendant of the Indian Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*) found in many parts of Asia. Many domestic dog breeds (*Canis lupus familiaris*) are also descended from the Indian Wolf but the Dingo retains enough of the characteristics of its ancestors to argue that it is a separate sub species and, as such, is known as *Canis lupus familiaris dingo*. It is believed that the Dingo is the ancestor of all dog breeds.

Coat colours in the Dingo

The dominant coat colour in Dingoes is yellow-ginger. Cream (white) and black and tan are also found. Most purebreds have white on their feet and a tail tip. In the remote areas of central Australia 90% of Dingoes are yellow-ginger, 4% black and tan and 2% white.

The Dingo's recognition as a breed

The Australian Dingo was recognised as a breed in November 1993. It cannot be exhibited as the purpose of it's recognition is not to have yet another exhibition animal, but to ensure that the Dingo survives in a pure form by having a register to keep record of pure Dingoes.

Identification of pure Dingoes

From the time of white man's arrival in Australia it is likely that Dingoes crossbred with domestic dogs. Fear of the crossbreeding of Dingoes with German Shepherd dogs to produce a "super sheep killer" caused the Australian government to introduce a ban on the importation of German Shepherd dogs into Australia from 1920 until the early 1970's

Scientists have identified eight measurements of the skull which differ between Dingoes, domestic and hybrid dogs and believe that accurate identification of a purebred Dingo can only be made by the measurement of the skull.

The Dingo family

In its natural state the Dingo lives either alone or in a small family group differing from many other wild dog species which may form packs. Dingoes have a clearly defined territory, which they rarely leave, but which may be shared with other Dingoes, which sometimes co-operate in hunting larger prey. The size of the home territory varies according to the food supply.

Dingoes mate for life with the female coming into season once per year (domestic dogs twice a year), normally between May to July and the pups are born from July to September.

Within an established social group only the prime male and female will mate.

Gestation is 63 days, the same as in domestic dogs.

Both parents take part in raising the pups. Litters average about five pups. At fourteen days old the mother regurgitates food for the pups and by the age of three weeks, when they will leave the den for short ventures, they are able to eat rabbit. The father may help feed the pups, as may other male and female Dingoes from within the social group. Prey around the den is not captured but left to allow the pups to practice their hunting skills.



Can I keep a Dingo?

The Aborigines and early white settlers took puppies from the nest at a very early age as once the puppies start to compete with litter mates and establish a pecking order they will not readily bond with their human owners. Even though it is considered unwise to separate young puppies from a litter, an exemption for Dingoes needs to be considered.

Dingoes must be obtained at a very young age to satisfactorily bond with their owners. If taken from the wild at 6 weeks of age they will only tame to a degree. If left until ten weeks old they will never make pets and should not be taken from the wild.

The Dingo rarely shows aggression. Years of persecution have developed a flight rather than bite temperament.

Dingoes are experts at conserving energy and although extremely agile spend most of their time lazing around.

Water is a barrier to Dingoes and most will only wade, not swim.

Dingoes must be made part of the family, included in family activities and outings and not banished to the backyard.

A securely fenced enclosure, an understanding of the male's restlessness during the breeding season, the inability to let it off lead for a run in the park, and perhaps more than any other breed, the necessity to be sure that you can provide a home for life (which may be over 20 years) means that considering owning a Dingo is not something to be lightly undertaken.

In many areas of Australia he is still considered vermin and cannot legally be kept. Other areas have stringent permit requirements. The Federal Government classifies the Dingo as wildlife and it may not be exported except by registered and approved wildlife parks and zoos.