

DINGOES (Map Ref 29)



LP, MP, LS, US



Whilst the Dingo is not originally from Australia, it is now considered to be a native Australian animal due to the length of time it is thought to have lived here. There are two theories which try to suggest an explanation. The first is that the Dingo was brought here by Aboriginal people 40 000 years ago when there was a land bridge joining Australia and Asia. The second, most commonly accepted theory is that Dingoes were brought to Australia by Asian Seafarers around 4000 years ago. This seems most likely as the Dingo is a direct descendent of the Asian Wolf.

In rural areas many people consider the Dingo to be a pest as it will often feed on livestock as part of its diet. Many different projects have tried to control the numbers of Dingoes including poisoning, trapping and shooting. These are not common practices anymore due to the risk that other native animals may also be affected by these methods, in an effort to control the spread and movement of the Dingo population, early rural pioneers constructed the world's longest fence to keep Dingoes out of areas occupied by livestock. The fence was doomed to fail since Dingoes already existed on both sides of the fence. Most of the fence still stands to this day.

Dingoes differ in many ways to other domestic breeds of dog. Firstly, they only have one breeding season per year, domestic dogs have two. Dingoes also have a larger brain capacity, erect ears and a keener sense of smell. Dingoes also have teeth which are sharp and pointed all the way to the rear of the mouth. They do not have any molars (flat-topped teeth) as domestic dogs do. These teeth are designed to act like shears to cut lumps of flesh which are swallowed whole.

Dingoes are considered by many to be an endangered species due to the limited, although unknown, number of purebred dingoes remaining in Australia. Dingos are able to interbreed with domestic dogs and therefore it is difficult to estimate the true number of purebred dingoes. Some estimate that as little as 10% of the current Dingo population is pure. It is these hybrids which are responsible for the Dingoes' poor reputation as they do not have the shy, skittish natures of purebreds. This means that when people offer them food, they are not afraid to approach and receive it. Both now and in the past, people have acted irresponsibly around Dingoes, treating them as they would domestic dogs instead of wild animals. Dingoes see people as a source of food which is not always the case. When visiting areas with Dingo populations such as Fraser Island, never ever feed or approach the Dingoes. Keep food well- secured and respect the Dingoes as spectacular wild animals to be observed from a distance.

Dingoes prefer to live in areas which border grasslands and woodlands. However, Dingoes will inhabit any area close to a water source and of course, food. Dingoes may feed on rodents, rabbits, wombats, wallabies and kangaroos as well as domestic livestock. Mostly Dingoes will hunt on their own but they will sometimes hunt larger prey as a group.

Q2

How do you think Dingoes colouring helps them?

THE TAN COLOURING HELPS THEM TO BLEND INTO SANDY HABITATS (ARID AUSTRALIA, FRASER ISLAND), THE BLACK AND TAN ASSISTS THEM TO BLEND INTO WOODLAND AREAS AMONGST THE TREES.

Q3

Dingoes have a number of unique characteristics. Can you suggest reasons for each of the following adaptations?

- Large, deep chest cavity
TO RUN DISTANCES AT HIGH SPEED, USEFUL FOR RUNNING DOWN PREY SUCH AS KANGAROOS.
- Long legs
TO BE ABLE TO MOVE ADEQUATELY IN SAND, ASSISTS WITH RUNNING.
- Large, erect ears
HEIGHTENED SENSE OF HEARING, VITAL FOR A PREDATORY ANIMAL,
- Sharp, pointed teeth running the entire length of each jaw
USED TO CRUSH BONES, DINGOES SWALLOW CHUNKS OF MEAT WHOLE RATHER THAN CHEWING SO THE TEETH ARE DESIGNED TO RIP MEAT INSTEAD OF GRIND,
- One breeding season per year
POPULATION CONTROL WHICH WILL ENSURE THAT THEY DO NOT PRODUCE TOO MANY COMPETITORS (OTHER DINCOES). THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT AS DINGOES HAVE A LONG LIFE SPAN AND VERY FEW PREDATORS TO HELP CONTROL THE POPULATION.

