



Dingo Carer's Handbook



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Special points of interest:

- Dingoes in captivity
- Dingoes in the wild
- Dingoes and your family
- Management of the dingo



Determining the purity of captive bred dingoes

Breeding of dingoes in captivity is one practical means of conserving an endangered species such as the alpine variety of dingo.

Whilst it is possible to get a very good idea whether your dingo is pure, by having it inspected by accredited assessors, the most foolproof and most accepted means to do this currently is via DNA assay. Cheek swabs, which are non invasive, and painless, are submitted to the university of New South Wales, where Dr. Alan Wilton has devised a means of examining the DNA and comparing with known parameters. Twenty tests are run on each sample.



Once each line of the family making up the pedigree of an individual dingo has been tested and proven to be pure it is no longer necessary to test future offspring.

All dingoes bred at the Dingo Discovery Centre are from 100% tested lines. Only pure animals are bred here, and this has been the case since 1994. We also continue with spot analysis each few generation.

Are you sure a dingo is for you?

The care of a dingo is a really serious responsibility to take in life.

A dingo is most definitely not just another dog breed. It is Australia's version of the wolf.



A dingo is an extremely sensitive, observant, affectionate and very clever animal when suitably bonded with you and all of the people it will share it's long and healthy life with.

Dingoes are extremely healthy, and we know of a number which have lived for 18 to 20 years. Dingoes bond, not only to their special humans, but also to their environment, and they definitely do not "transplant" successfully, so if you plan to travel away for long periods, or move house often, a dingo is not for you. A boarding kennel experience can permanently ruin the temperament of a dingo, so if there is not going to be someone the dingo knows and trusts who can care for it during your absences, and you are not settled in a permanent residence, we urge you to rethink the dingo ownership situation. 95% of dingoes which have been re-homed end up having to be destroyed, as their chance of adopting to a new owner or home is slim indeed.

We recommend that to have the best chance of a successful master/dingo bond, that you acquire your dingo at around 5 to 6 weeks of age. Dingoes are much advanced on the domestic dog breeds of the same age. This probably means you should order your pup from the breeder well before the breeding season, which is annually the winter months. Early age introduction to other pets and family members is essential for a lasting bond. Dingoes which have been well socialized can successfully change to new homes up to 16 weeks, and sometimes even later. This will depend on the quality of the socialisation and the individual nature of the particular pup. There are some rare dingoes which are so gregarious that they are able to readjust at any age, but this is not the normal expectation.

To be totally responsible you must provide an escape proof facility where your dingo can be secure and happy, and where you can safely leave your dingo while you are not with it. Ideally it should be childproof as well. Where permits are required, a minimum area of 30 square metres will be required. See inside for more details.



A large dose of tolerance and perseverance is a requirement of the dingo owner. Dingoes can and do learn basic canine manners, but become very easily bored with repetitious exercises, and will switch off if bored.

A dingo is a predatory wild animal, driven by natural survival traits. It deserves an owner with large reserves of love, patience, energy, and sensitivity to it's needs. Do not get a dingo without long consideration of these issues.

Feeding and grooming your dingo

As supreme survivors, dingoes are very easy to feed. Essentially carnivorous animals require the major part of their diet to be meat based.

The most convenient method of keeping your captive dingo in peak condition and being sure he is getting all the nutrients which his species requires is to feed a high quality commercial canine diet supplement with the provision of large raw meaty bones.

We recommend a puppy formula for the first 9 months of life, or for females in the late stages of pregnancy and while lactating.

Thereafter an adult formula, and in advanced age, switching to one of the specially formulated senior diets. Dingoes will do fine on 1/2 to 2/3 of the manufacturer's directions printed on labels. We prefer a dry ration to canned foods, as it gives the jaws and teeth more work to do.



If you wish to remain closer to nature in your feeding regimen, then whole rabbits or chickens with entrails intact will provide them with what is required. We know of some rural living dingo owners who butcher fresh road killed kangaroos.

Fresh water should, of course, be available at all times.

Dingoes also require regular worming commencing at the age of 3 weeks.

Roundworm and tapeworm are the most commonly encountered. These are routinely controlled by a number of quality products available on the market, administered as per manufacturers instructions.

Your dingo should be vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus, to which dingoes are as equally susceptible to any other canine.

Each spring/summer your alpine dingo will shed his undercoat. Dingoes love to be groomed. And a bent wire slicker brush will be ideal finishing with a comb through with a medium toothed steel comb.



Breeding season



By the end of February each year you will notice subtle changes in your dingoes behaviour.

Both males and females experience this breeding season. Your female will develop a fierce urge to get free and run away. Your male will experiences heightened hormonally induced behaviours, and if he is in the company of a cycling female, everything will revolve about the urge to get to her and keep other males away.

March to April will see the female showing outward changes in her physiology. She will develop a bloody discharge from the vulva and act sensuously when touched around the rear quarters.

Three weeks of this with the domestic dog and all returns to normal. Not so with your dingo. If she is not allowed to mate after first showing colour, your dingo becomes mate able again some 3—4 weeks later, without all the outward signs being visible, and yet again right up to the end of July. Many wild species have similar multi oestrus periods within their programmed life cycles, and so do cats.

If puppies are not your aim then you will need facilities to keep your pair separated and you must keep them apart from March to July.

The mating act is accomplished normally and your help will not be appreciated. Puppies can be expected 63 days after mating. A secure, warm nest and an increase in nutrition should be provided for the whelping dingo.

Never breed a litter unless you know all pups will obtain good homes.



Now that you have read and understood the commitment required to caring properly for a dingo, if you believe you could provide an appropriate home. Please place your order -details last page. Puppies are usually ready for new homes during the months of July and August.

Dingo development

At 5 weeks your dingo will be as forward both physically and mentally as a domestic breed dog is at 8 weeks. It is important that he be mentally stimulated by inclusion in outings and family activities right from the start for a successful transition into puppy hood and then to adulthood. Socializing with children and adults, local surroundings, strange places—car rides, other animals—all play an important part in the successful socialization and mental well being of your dingo.



Lead training should commence by 6 weeks so he learns to stay close to you and not wonder off on his own. Be sure he is protected from canine contagious diseases before you take him where other dogs may go. If there is already a family domestic dog about, everything will be much simpler, as your dingo will naturally fall in line with his canine mate's actions. Dogs really need to have canine as well as human companionship. They are naturally social animals.

Your successful relationship with your dingo will depend on you being seen by your dingo as the "alpha" or his pack leader. You must be the controller, not the dingo. Subordinates

- do not sleep in the alpha's bed,
- do not eat first,
- do not rush out the door first,
- do not win tug-o-war games,
- do not get to keep toys after the games are over.

They submit to grooming or any attention by the alpha WHEN the alpha wishes. They are happy to be in this position and will be far more content with life and less troublesome.



Successful socialization depends on lots of early exposure and continuous introduction of new stimuli for the first 18 months.

The enclosure

A safe and comfortable pen which your dingo will be happy in is an indispensable commodity in successful dingo owning. Every party, including your neighbours, and visitors will be at ease in the knowledge that the dingo cannot escape. Most of all, your dingo will be totally content in his own territory, and will feel safe from strange visiting people and animals. Even if you intend to have your dingo by your side 24/7 there will come a time when you must leave it unattended.



In Victoria, it is law, and no permit to own a dingo will be issued without inspection of the facility in which the dingo is to be kept.

Stipulations are a minimum of 30 square meters floor space, with dig proof base and of a height sufficient to exclude jumping or climbing over. 2 meters is the minimum requirement. Adequate weatherproof housing is also required. Position this to avoid prevailing winds and weather. Two dingoes may be kept in such an enclosure. For every additional dingo the area must be increased accordingly. We also recommend that a play-gym be included in the enclosure to give your dingo variety of exercise opportunities. Dingoes love to sun themselves on a high shelf or ledge. And this can be included in whatever play apparatus you choose to provide. Of course, a sturdy locking gate with a childproof latch, and ideally a double gate system should be provided to prevent any chance of escape. Dingoes are exceedingly adept at learning to work latches and bolts, so be sure and think about this when installing.

We also recommend that there be very little space left between uprights or under gates or fence panels. Spacing should preclude a dingo getting his paws under or through, avoiding limb accidents.

Your backyard can be your enclosure—so long as there is no means of escape and gates are totally secure.



Dingo characteristics



Dingoes are NOT dogs.

Canis Lupus Dingo = dingo
Canis Familiaris = dog

A number of unique distinguishing features separate the dingo from the domesticated dog. Some experts believe the dingo is and always has been the Australian wolf, others believe him to be the most ancient form of intermediary species between wolf and dog. DNA studies are showing that the dingo has been evolving in Australia for somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 years. The true facts of his coming to Australia remain a mystery yet to be solved.

Dingoes are physically far more flexible in limb movement than dogs.

Dingoes have no body odour as a true wild animal.

Dingoes have a unique “bottle” shaped tail, with grey mouse undercoat.

Dingoes are narrow bodied with the cheekbones as the widest part of the anatomy.

Dingoes have a single annual breeding cycle.

Dingoes howl, chortle, chatter, snort and purr, do not naturally bark like a dog, although they can learn to make a similar sound.



Dingoes are driven by nature's survival instincts—hunting, procreation, protection of territory and family. Dingoes act more like cats than dogs.

Dingoes adhere to strict social hierarchy. They have been known to mate for life. Males participate in weaning and teaching of young.

The dingo in the wild



The dingo is Australia's top-order terrestrial predator. He is the equivalent to India's Tiger, or Africa's Lion. All creatures and the pasture depend on the health of the dingo for their own well being. The Lion King story is also the story of the dingo. If you take the keystone regulating species out of the equation, the eco-system falls into ill health and disarray. Any land with an over-abundance of herbivores will become denuded and barren. The very diminutive size of the dingo sends a message that Australia cannot support giant beasts.

Since the first agriculturalists commenced land clearing in Australia, the dingo has been hunted and eradicated from his former territory, where he kept the kangaroos and wallabies in check. Foxes, wild pigs, goats, cats and other introduced pests have ravaged the landscape & are now doing untold damage, and making extinct many species of small animal. If man is THE top predator, then he has lacked the wisdom to control custody of these creatures he should properly care for.

Scientists have been warning for years that the demise of the Alpine dingo is almost complete. Eradication program's, habitat snatching and hybridization with irresponsibly managed domestic dogs have taken their toll. Until there is a national park where the dingo is permitted to exist without interference the only safe place for this marvelous animal is in captivity. Help is needed in the conservation of this species if it is to be part of our future world.



Dingo "maligned scapegoat" keystone eco-modulator

"It is a miracle and an unimagined euphoric high to be able to share communications with another species, especially if it is a wild creature."

Throughout its entire documented history, only two instances of human deaths involving dingoes have been recorded in Australia—one of those remains a mystery of fact, the other can clearly be shown to involve habitat encroachment and instinctive protection of young. Compare this with the myriad documented death by shark and death by crocodile—also creatures of nature involved in their own habitat, and then overlay the continual reports of hundreds of deaths caused by domesticated dogs, horses, cattle and other native animals such as emus and kangaroos. Let us for a moment also consider the thousand of deaths each year involving bicycles, automobiles, playgrounds, swimming pools, appliances, lightening, trees, etc... Yet the word "dingo" can be guaranteed to prick up the dullest of ears, sell hundreds of thousands of newspapers, and glue the public to their TV screens like nothing else. What a burden to bear on such diminutive shoulders. Labeled "aggressive", by those who have no experience with dingoes, when in fact he is introverted and shy. How do we tackle this seemingly insurmountable task of removing the stigma of demon from the dingo?



Too slowly, too little, - too late? Some enlightened cattle farmers have ceased dingo control on their properties. These people are reporting healthier pasture, less kangaroos, no foxes, cats predating on small marsupials, and they are getting more and better cattle to market.

Environmentalists are realizing the place the dingo holds as keystone eco-controller is vitally important to the wellbeing of the bush and to all of us who ultimately depend upon it's health.

Yet very little has flowed on to the dingo in the wild. In fact State Governments proudly announce to their rural constituents that they have allocated vastly increased mega-dollars to "wild dog" control by —aerial bait drops of the devastatingly toxic 1080, while they issue statements aimed at appeasing the environmentalists that they will conduct ongoing studies into the role of the dingo in the eco-system. No doubt these 15 year studies will conclude that the dingo is extinct.

The answer lies in having the dingo removed from pest animal lists Australia wide; and in education.



This handbook is produced in the interests of better informed dingo keeping.

The Dingo Discovery Centre is a not for profit operation based at our sanctuary for dingoes just outside of Melbourne. We are dedicated to the preservation of the world's purest dog—or the only wolf species to have successfully crossed the equator and which colonized naturally the continent of Australia from 5,000—10,000 years ago. Our concerns are for the dingo in the wild state, whether Alpine, Fraser Island or Inland (tropical, desert).

Further information may be found on our website.



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