

Dog aware fact



What is a wild dog?

The terms 'wild dog', 'feral dog', 'dingo' and 'hybrid' have different meanings—they are not interchangeable, and it is important to understand the differences.

Wild dogs are any dogs that are not domesticated. This includes dingoes, feral dogs and hybrids. Yearling wild dogs frequently disperse more than 100 km from the place where they were born.

Dingoes are natives of Asia selectively bred by humans from wolves. They were present in Australia before the arrival of domestic dogs 3500–4000 years ago. Pure dingoes are populations or individuals that have not yet hybridised with domestic dogs or hybrids.

Dingoes are not easily distinguished from other wild dogs and can be reliably identified only by detailed skull measurements and their genetic makeup. They breed once a year, usually in early winter. They are *typically* ginger or yellow with white feet and chest, however they may be also be pure white, ginger, black and tan or pure black.

Dingoes occupy an area known as a 'home range', which can vary in size according to the productivity of the country—from 9 km² in rainforest areas to 300 km² on the Nullarbor Plain.

It has been estimated that 50 per cent of the dingoes in south-east Queensland, and 90–95 per cent of those in south-west and central Queensland are pure.

Hybrids include dogs resulting from the crossbreeding of a dingo and a domestic dog, and all descendants of crossbred progeny.

Feral dogs are domestic dogs that have been abandoned or have strayed and are living in a wild state in rural areas, bushland or urban environments.

Domestic dogs are all dog breeds (other than dingoes) selectively bred by humans, and kept and fed by someone. These can be pets, guard dogs, livestock guardian dogs or working dogs. Domestic dogs may also behave like wild dogs if they are not adequately controlled or are free roaming.

Free-roaming dogs are dogs that are owned by humans but not restrained, and free to travel away from their owner's property. These domestic dogs may behave like wild dogs and can attack livestock and wildlife.

If you are dog aware:
You know what is meant by the term 'wild dog'.