

# Dog aware fact



## Why control wild dogs?

Wild dogs are conservatively estimated to cost the Queensland grazing industry around \$33 million each year. Predation losses cost in excess of \$18.3 million, disease transmission costs come to around \$9 million, and annual control costs are approximately \$5.4 million.

Although significant, these costs do not begin to encompass the environmental and social costs, including stress due to loss of income, stock or pets, and the worry and fear caused by wild dogs skulking around people's homes and children.

### Predation impacts

Wild dogs, including dingoes, wild domestic dogs and hybrids, all have significant impacts on livestock and pets. These animals have a long history of coming into contact with humans due to the increase in food supply around people's homes.

In grazing areas, wild dogs often harass or kill domestic animals without eating them. Wild dogs at 'play' appear to select individuals that are strong, healthy and 'fleet of foot', rather than the weak and feeble animals—this behaviour is the main economic impact of wild dogs.

### Human–wild dog interaction

Wild dogs are predators that hunt to survive and they instinctively fear humans. This inborn fear is reduced when humans provide food and encourage wild dogs to set up territories outside their natural environment.

There is always some risk when dealing with wild predators; however, when these are compared with other risks in our environment, the risk of attack by wild dogs is small. For example, each year in Australia approximately 3000 people are bitten by snakes. Of these, about 500 need treatment with antivenene and, on average, one or two people die. However, in the last 30 years only two people have been killed by wild dogs; both of these attacks were in areas of high human–wild dog interaction and where humans often provided food.

### Disease impacts and human health implications

In addition to predation, wild dogs pose a significant disease threat. Wild dogs are almost solely responsible for the spread of *Echinococcus hydatidosis* (hydatid) and *Neospora caninum* in cattle.

Dogs are the primary host of hydatid, which is a serious parasitic disease caused by tapeworms. Domestic stock, native animals and humans can be infected as secondary hosts. Once ingested, hydatid eggs hatch inside the body causing the formation of gross cysts that usually develop in the liver or lungs. These cysts slowly enlarge causing pain to the host.

### If you are dog aware:

**You know to wash your hands thoroughly after handling dogs because hydatid eggs can survive on the coat of a dog even when it is dead.**

*Neospora caninum* is a parasite of dogs and cattle. Although it does not infect humans, it can cause the abortion of cow fetuses—a serious problem for the cattle industry.

Rabies is not currently found in Australia; however, if an outbreak did occur, wild dogs would be high-risk carriers of the disease, like the coyote and wolf in North America.

### **Your responsibility**

Because of their potential to cause an adverse economic and social impact, wild dogs have been declared pest animals under the Queensland *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. Consequently, all landowners in Queensland are required to control wild dogs on their property.

#### **If you are dog aware:**

**You know wild dog control is your responsibility.**