

Information for Dingo Owners

What are Dingoes?

The dingo is a carnivorous dog that was thought to have been introduced into Australia over 3,500 years ago. Though the dingo has often been referred to as a subspecies of the grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), recent studies suggest they are the world's oldest breed of dog. As a result of debate over the origins of the dingo, a number of scientific names are used to describe it, such as *Canis lupus dingo* (which is most commonly used), *Canis dingo*, *Canis familiaris* (breed dingo) and *Canis lupus familiaris* (breed dingo). There are also dingo-dog hybrids that often look and behave like dingoes.

Is a dingo right for you?

Dingoes and dingo hybrids have been kept successfully as pets. However, there can be a number of problems with owning a dingo, particularly where it is intended to make it a companion (or pet). Most people who buy dingoes do not fully appreciate the 'hard-wired' behaviours of these animals which often make them extremely difficult to keep.

Dingoes have a number of characteristics that include:

- aloof cat-like behaviour,
- escape behaviour,
- destructive behaviour,
- aggressive behaviour,
- instinctive predatory behaviour (aggression) towards other pets,
- limited ability to be trained,
- they should not be placed in boarding kennels, and
- limited ability to re-home if the first owner is unable to keep them.

These types of behaviours can often become more prominent as a dingo reaches adulthood at around two years of age, and training dingoes to be more 'friendly' is difficult. As a result, many owners are unable to cope with them when the animals reach adulthood, resulting in numerous animals being dumped or escaping from their owner's residence.

Housing dingoes

If you are still prepared to own a dingo, it is important to ensure that you provide it with an appropriate enclosure. Dingoes are very good diggers and climbers so the residence where they are kept needs to be adequately equipped to cater for their needs and contain the animal. As a result, they should ideally be provided with their own enclosure that has:

- an area of approximately 220m² or more to allow the dingoes to exercise;
- a fence design that utilises chain mesh manufactured from at least 3.15mm wire or weldmesh manufactured from at least 4mm wire with a

maximum mesh spacing of 50mm. This fence should extend into the ground at least 30cm;

- a 2m high fence with an additional 0.5m inhang to stop the dingoes climbing out of the enclosure;
- a 1m mesh footing that extends from the base of the fence into the enclosure (that is pinned down) to stop the dingoes digging out of the enclosure;
- complexity within the enclosure, including large logs and rocks for the dingoes to climb on; and
- a weatherproof sleeping area.

It is extremely important to ensure that the enclosure does not allow children access without adult supervision.

Training

Training dingoes is a difficult task, but here are a few tips that can aid in the process:

- begin training at approximately eight weeks of age, and ensure that training is consistent and regular;
- keep the training simple;
- praise the dingo when it does the right thing;
- say a firm “NO” when the dingo does the wrong thing;
- always teach the dingo to play gently;
- never hit a dingo;
- never call the dingo to chastise it;
- always be patient with the dingo; and
- be vigilant with a dingo when in public – ensure that dingoes are never chained up in a public place. All dogs, including dingoes, are required by law, when in a public place, to have a collar around the neck with a tag attached that shows the dog’s name and the address or phone number of the dog’s owner.

General Requirements

As with other ‘dogs’ all dingoes must be registered and microchipped under the *Companion Animals Act 1998*. Microchipping and registration is a two part process that requires dog owners to:

- 1) have their animals implanted with a microchip from the time they are 12 weeks of age, at point of sale or change of ownership (whichever occurs first); and
- 2) register their animals with their NSW local council by 6 months of age.

Where to go for more information or help with your dingo

There are several books and publications that provide information about the characteristics of dingoes. Web resources, such as www.dingosanctuary.com.au, are also available to provide more information about the behaviour and characteristics of dingoes.