

Dingo

Scientific Name: *Canis lupus dingo*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Canidae



The dingo's head and body length is about 46 to 48 inches, and its tail length is 11 to 13 inches. Their shoulder height is about 19 inches with a weight of 22 to 44 pounds. They are usually tawny yellow in color, but some individuals are white, black, brown, rust, or other shades. The feet and the tip of the tail are often white. The dingo can be distinguished from other forms of canines by its longer muzzle, more massive molariform teeth, and longer, more slender canine teeth. The oldest definitely known fossils of the dingo date from about 3,500 years ago, but other remains may be as old as 8,600 years. Humans arrived in Australia at least 30,000 years ago. The dingo evidently was brought in long afterward, but before true domestication had been achieved, so it was able to establish wild populations. There are also wild dog populations in New Guinea and Timor which are related to the dingo group.

Range

Australia.

Habitat

Deserts and grasslands.

Gestation

63 days

Litter

1-8, but usually 4-5 in a litter

Behavior

Most activity seems to be nocturnal. Daily movements average about 10 to 20 km. On the average, individuals are active for 15 hours and at rest for the rest of the day. The dingo is basically solitary, but individuals in each area form a loose, amicable association and sometimes come together. Fighting may develop among members of different groups. Although not particularly vocal, the dingo has a variety of sounds. Howls are meant to locate others from its group and repel intruders. They are frequently heard during the annual breeding season. Although regularly captured and tamed by natives and other people of Australia, the dingo has never been successfully domesticated.

Reproduction

In the wild, pups are born in late winter and spring. Yearlings may assist an older pair to raise their pups. Independence is generally achieved by 3 to 4 months, but the young animals often then associate with a mature male.

Wild Diet

Mostly small mammals; occasional kangaroos, cattle or sheep