

DINGO

INFORMATION

SHEETS

Dingoes – Explanation and Acknowledgements.

A Breed Standard is a description of the appearance and characteristics of a breed. In the case of the Dingo, we have an excellent opportunity to preserve a true record of a pure breed of dog as yet unspoiled by man. It is an unfortunate reality that the appearance and temperament of many breeds have been changed almost beyond recognition within a few generations to comply with a fashionable trend.

The Dingo was a close companion of the original inhabitants of Australia. Forced into a feral existence following the European invasion, the breed has been naturally selected for its potential to survive in the wild. As has been said of the Canaan dog, the Dingo may have been fortunate in becoming a feral animal over the past two centuries, as it has been able to develop naturally into an incredibly efficient survival machine of beauty, brains and health.

The first breed descriptions were recorded as early as 1788. However, these were restricted to the dog that inhabited the Sydney area, where the first vocabulary of the local Aboriginal Dialect gives the word 'tingo' for the native dog in that area.

After this initial wave of interest, the Dingo was then relegated to the role of the 'unwanted'. General ignorance of the breed left it vulnerable to greatly exaggerated stories of destruction and pure supposition. Later descriptions which reflected the general feeling for the breed simply refer to it as being 'a yellow dog with a bushy tail and evil expression'.

As a result of Australia's regional and climatic extremes, there are considerable variations to be found in the Dingo. The dog found in the tropical north with its short, single coat, very pliable skin and sinewy body, contrasts vividly with the fox or coyote-like dog of the cooler southern mountain regions which has a dense, double coat. Physical and behavioural characteristics also vary, as do hunting techniques. With the acceptance of this document, and hoped for approval for the legal and informed keeping of the Dingo by private individuals, the way will then be clear for the breed to participate in obedience training classes and trials run by the various controlling bodies. Familiarity with the breed could be developed by non-competitive displays or parades at official functions.

To protect its welfare it is recommended that the breed's participation in the Breed Ring be delayed until it is better understood. It is hoped that the Dingo, our National Dog, can be protected from becoming a fashionable pet. Only through education on the very special needs of this natural predator can this be accomplished.

The Dingo is a highly skilled hunting dog, a supreme sight hound which also uses scent and hearing to hunt. Being extremely intelligent, independent, cautious and agile, with strong reasoning powers, it is not suitable for pet owners generally. Successful integration into the domestic environment requires understanding, patience and dedication. It is a commitment for the lifetime of the Dingo.

Skeletal remains indicate that the Dingo has remained unchanged for over 3,000 years. Being Australia's native dog, breeders have an added responsibility to ensure that the dingo of the future will be recognisable as the dingo of the past.

A basic description of the Australian Dingo was first drawn up in May 1975 by Berenice Walters who later formed the Australian Native Dog Training Society of NSW Limited. The document was revised in 1976, and again in 1978, then tabled at a Committee Meeting of the Society on 12th August 1978, following a Breed Classification Field Days held at Headquarters Bargo on 17th June, 1978.

This event was attended by Mr. Robert Curtis and Mr. Peter Warby of the RAS Consultative Committee, All Breeds Judges Mr. W. Spilstead and Mr. F.S. Price and Obedience & Tracking Judges Mr. Graeme Field & Miss Lucille Dixon [Ellem] those present had the opportunity to see some thirty Dingoes paraded along with Basenjis and Pharaoh Hounds. It was a most interesting and informative occasion.

Chairman and the Society's Consultative Committee, Mr. F. Wirrer, and Mr. Warby then met to discuss the contents with Mrs. Walters, and on January 5th, 1979, with Mr. Price in the Chair the revised document was further discussed. At the next meeting of the Society's Consultative Meeting on 19 November, 1979 attended by Mr. Curtis, Mr. Warby, Society Secretary the late Malcolm Telleson, Society Vice President the late Mrs. Felicity Maclean the revised document was discussed with Mrs. Walters.

After consultation with Society Veterinarian, Dr. J. Della-Vedova, Mr. Wirrer, Mr. Price, Mr. C. Walters and Mrs. A. Green, the document was again revised and tabled on March 22nd, 1980. Copies were sent to all members of the Committee and Society Consultants, requesting their further comments. We are greatly indebted to the late Dr. H. Spira B.V.Sc., MRCVS for his most valued assistance and comments in the drawing up of this final document, Dr. Spira was a Councillor of the Royal Agricultural Society, and past Chairman of the RAS Kennel Control's consultative Committee and Judges' Examination Committee.



Breed Standard.

General Appearance.

The general appearance of the Australian Native Dog is that of a medium built, elegant and active dog of great nimbleness and agility. It has a short straight back with distinct waist and cut-up, and gives the impression of being "high on the leg". Aristocratic and graceful, the breed clearly displays its purity and nobility. The outward appearance varies considerably from the sinewy, single-coated, rippling muscled dog of the tropical far north, to the fox-like, or coyote-like dog of the colder southern mountain regions which has a thick double coat, or the smaller and finer dog of the arid regions. The coat is seasonal.

Characteristics

The Dingo is strongly individualistic, highly intelligent, curious and affectionate, seldom slavish or demonstrative in its affection, and generally cautious. NB: Approach and handling of this breed must at all times be gentle. The hand should be extended to below the head and time given to accept. At no time should the dog be panicked by forceful handling. The breed seldom recovers from a frightening experience, or rejection.

Head & Skull

The skull is strong and impressive. Broad between the ears and moderately rounded with ample musculing; there is a distinct furrow extending down to between the eyes, the muscles on either side of the furrow being independently mobile. The forehead is slightly rounded. There is a distinct occipital peak, and a slight but distinct stop, the skull tapering to a strong, deep muzzle. The muzzle is strong, clean and deep, only slightly lessening in width and depth towards the nose. Length of muzzle is approx. equal to the length of skull. Viewed from the front, the head forms a wide triangle, the tapering of the muzzle accentuated by the highly developed jaw muscles. The jaws are powerful, clean and deep. The lips are tight fitting and black. The teeth are well developed, even, and meet in a scissor bite. The canines, being long and sharp, slender and sabre shaped are often damaged. This should not be penalised. The nostrils are large, well opened and sensitive. Usually black in colour, liver or pink noses are acceptable. In the young, short coated varieties in particular, there is often distinctive fine wrinkling on the forehead giving a frown effect. FAULTS: Skull lacking distinctive strength, lippiness, missing teeth, over or undershot jaws, gross or heavy muzzle.

The Eye

The eye is almond shaped, set obliquely, hazel or dark brown in colour, open, but not protruding, medium sized and expressive. Eye rims should be black and unbroken. Overall expression is one of softness and intelligence, far-seeing and cautious, giving impression of a dog with strong reasoning ability.

Ear

The ears are distinctive, expressive and sensitive in their use, strong, slightly rounded at the tip, erect when alerted but can be carried folded back along the neck, set on top of the head, slightly hooded, fine in texture and forward pointing. A characteristic position is for one ear to be firmly pricked and the other to rotate sensitively to pick up sounds. Size is medium, but varies from the large lightly haired ear of the dog from the hot climates, to the often smaller but well haired ear of the dog from the colder regions. Ear placement is more important than size, but it is essential that they be hooded, forward pointing and set on top of the head. FAULTS: Low set or loose ears, or ears lacking the characteristic hooded and forward pointing qualities, large, soft ears. NB: Naturally, the ears of immature dogs may not exhibit the strength and mobility of the adult.

Neck

The neck is impressive in its strength and development, strong, crested, fitting well into the shoulders accentuating the crest to give the head a lofty carriage. FAULTS: Weak or throaty necks.

Forequarters

The chest is narrow to medium in width, the brisket deep, reaching to the elbows in mature specimens. The forelegs are straight with long forearms and distinctive musculature. The pasterns should be of good length, moderately straight, flexible, but vary from the shorter and thicker pastern of the mountain dog to the straight and more upright pastern of the northern dog. The shoulders are fine at the points, well laid back with good length of forearm. Feet may be slightly turned out, but equally so. Strength of bone varies but at no time should it detract from the strength and mobility of the dog. FAULTS: Weakness of any kind.

Body

The back is strong, straight and short with no suggestion of slackness, slightly rising over the loin. The ribs are well sprung, oval in shape, deep with plenty of heart room, deep brisket, short coupled and ending in a definite waist with well defined cut-up. NB: In this breed, the ribbing of bitches carries further back forming a much shorter coupling. FAULTS: Dipping back, slack loin, heavy body lacking characteristic waist.

Hindquarters

Strong, powerful and muscular, set under the body, well angulated and exhibiting tremendous drive and agility thus enabling the dog to turn quickly and spring in any direction. Thighs are thick, strong, well muscled, but vary from the moderately turned stifle of the mountain dog to the well turned stifle of the open range dog. The hindquarters may appear cow hocked when standing or gaing slowly, but should move parallel when in full gait. FAULTS: Weak hindquarters, long rear pasterns.

Leg & Feet

The legs are clean, strong but not clumsy and must be of good length with sufficient slope of pastern to give flexibility. The ideal feet are medium sized, compact, round to oval in shape, with thick pads and arched toes. There is ample hair between pads. FAULTS: Weak and splayed feet.

Tail

Like the ears, the tail is expressive, set on as a continuation of the spine, broad at the base, and tapering to a point. It has a moderate brush which varies from the full, fox-like brush of the heavier-coated varieties, to the tail of the shorter-coated varieties which is clothed all round in a short, dense coat. This gives it the rounded appearance of an otter-like tail, base plump as in dogs regarded as water dogs. There is a black dorsal spot about a quarter of the length from the butt, which denotes a scent gland. In older dogs it may be defined by dry, bristly hair. It is common for the tail to be seen held out from the body, dropping at a right angle just above the scent gland. Tail carriage varies from the low sweeping tail of the open range dog, to the curl falling over gracefully on the side.

Colour

Cream, gold, red, black, sable, commonly with white or fawn markings are all acceptable and equally desirable.

Movement

Is governed by terrain and varies considerably. At all times impressive, and must exhibit lightness, power, strength and agility. A: The dog from the plains has a swift swinging stride with tireless light running gait. B: The dog from the tablelands and open range country has a powerful gait with durability. C: the dog from the steep mountain regions has well developed hindquarters, capable of far reaching, effortless, light running springing gait whilst at the same time ready to change direction.

Weight & Size

The weight is dependent on the overall size and build, but varies from approximately 13.5 to 22.7 kilograms. At no time should the breed appear heavy bodied. Bitches are lighter built than dogs.

Height

The average height for dogs is 48 to 55cm, less for bitches, but can vary from 43.2 to 61.0cm, according to variety and seasons. Type and symmetry are more important than size.



DINGO INFORMATION

Eye-catching, curious and sometimes dangerous, the dingo is a common sight across Australia. The dingo – Australia's only native dog – is thought to have descended from a family of wild Asian dogs. Introduced to Australia about 4000 – 6000 years ago, dingoes probably found their way to Australia through trading between Aboriginal people and Indonesians fishing in our waters. Today, dingoes are found in many parts of Australia. Dingoes are Australia's largest meat-eater [carnivore] and hunt many other animals such as the kangaroo. The dingo is thought to have contributed to the mainland extinction of the thylacine [Tasmanian tiger] through increased competition for food. Unable to bark, the dingo howls at night to keep the family group together and to warn other to stay away.

What does it look like?

A pure-bred adult dingo, standing more than 60cm high and weighing about 15kg, is slightly smaller than a German shepherd. Dingoes are naturally lean, with large hooded ears permanently pricked and tails with a white tip. Although mainly sandy-yellow in colour, some dingoes are black and tan, white. A dingo's colour is determined by where it lives. Tan dingoes are found in sandy areas while darker black and tan dingoes are found in forests.

Where does it live?

From harsh deserts to lush rainforests, the highly adaptable dingo is found in every habitat and state of Australia except Tasmania. Dingoes favour edges of forests next to grasslands. In deserts, access to drinking water determines where the animal can live.

What does it eat?

The dingo is not a fussy eater, and will search widely for food and eat whatever it finds. Dingoes search for food alone, although they live in a family group which protects its territory from other dingoes. Dingoes hunt mainly at night. Depending on the size of the prey, they hunt alone or in packs. Their main meals of choice are Australia's small native mammals, although domestic animals and some farm stock are also on the menu. This makes the animal unpopular with farmers.

How does it Breed?

Dingoes live for about 10 years in the wild, and within Sanctuaries like ours, we have had Dingoes live till 18 years and can start breeding once they reach the age of one or two. Unlike the domestic dog, the dingo breeds only once a year. Litters of around four to six pups are born in areas such as a hollow log or under a ledge. As dingoes have inter-bred with introduced domestic dogs, pure-bred dingoes are becoming harder to spot. The relatively isolated Fraser Island, off the eastern coast of Queensland, is thought to have one of the purest remaining strains of dingo.

Threats to survival

Inbreeding with domestic dogs threatens the dingo's ability to survive as a separate species. Along the more populated coastal areas and in certain areas inland, inbreeding has become a serious problem and has weakened the distinct nature of this native animal. For the dingo to survive as an individual species, the release and number of feral dogs must be controlled. Public hostility is another threat to the dingo. Because it takes some livestock, the dingo is considered by many to be a pest. Along with foxes, rabbits and feral pigs, the dingo is considered a pest under the Rural Lands Protection Act. So, dingo numbers can be controlled outside protected areas.

Sanctuaries like the Australian Native Dog Conservation Society Ltd, in Bargo New South Wales, we have been preserving the pure Dingo for the last 36 years, and our breeding colony contains 5 generations. www.dingosanctuary.com.au

THE ESSENTIAL WILD PREDATOR

The Dingo has a very important place in the wild ecology of our continent. It is our only large mammal predator; apart from man that is, and is arguably the strongest defence against the problems caused by introduced feral animals.

It is now widely recognised that removal of dingoes from the wild results in an over population of feral animals such as cats, foxes, rabbits, pigs, rats and mice resulting decline of native species, one notable example being the bilby.

In Western Australia the solution to this problem is to widely use 1080 poison. There are very few countries in the whole world still approving the use of this vile and deadly, cruel poison. Austral and New Zealand fall into this category, many other countries recognise that it is an inhumane compound and have barred its production and use, the USA is one such county.

1080 [sodium monofluoroacetate] has been around since the 1940's, there is no antidote for it, and it is indiscriminate in its destruction. It is lethal to all mammals including humans, and insects. It was experimented with in Germany during WWII but was discontinued due to the detrimental effect the observation of the dying in prolonged agony had on guards.

When spread in WA by farmers and DEC [Department of Environment and Conservation] we know that it not only kills carnivorous feral animals, but also other native mammalian species, birds of prey, and even kangaroos which have eaten grass where poisoned animals have vomited. National Dingo Preservation and Recovery Programme [NDPRP] president Dr. Ian Gunn, stated that: "The dog was the first animal domesticated by our ancestors. If you want to see what the ancient dogs which first lived in a close relationship with our ancestors looked like, then look at the dingo."

Dingoes & Humans in Australia

When dingoes first arrived in Australia as companion animals which were traded with indigenous Australians the Thylacine was still thriving in Austral as the top predator mammal. Soon after the white invasion, the thylacine was declared extinct. This left the dingo as the only remaining top predator mammal. When white humans arrived they brought many of their homeland's domestic and wild animals with them, any of which, when let loose on Australia became feral pests and we are still suffering the consequences. The dingo would have played a critical role in the natural control of these pests had it not been for the fact that the white population saw it as a threat to pastoral activity. This led to persecution with bounties placed on dingo heads, and a wholesale destruction programme of poisoning and shooting was begun. Three hundred or so years later we continue that persecution. As is time we woke up and recognised the important part the dingo can play in controlling feral animals in the wild environment without the use of deadly and cruel poisons. We need to establish a natural balance so that feral animals such as rabbits, cats, and foxes have a predator to keep them under control. We know that dingoes are capable of living as companion animals with humans, but we also need to preserve wild populations for the sake of the dingo, and for the sake of our other native creatures. The first Australian's recognised the value of the dingo in the natural scheme of things, why can't we?