

Wild dog facts

Why control wild dogs?

Predation impacts

Wild dogs, including dingoes, wild domestic dogs and hybrids, all have significant impacts on livestock and pets. Several economic impact studies have estimated that the cost to livestock producers in Queensland is at least \$22 million and may be as high as \$67 million. The true costs for wild dog predation is probably much higher as no economic studies have taken into account the lost opportunity costs to producers or the flow on effect to rural townships.

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.

Neospora caninum is a parasite of dogs and cattle. Although it does not infect humans, it can cause the abortion of cow foetuses—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.

Environmental Impacts

Predation on small remnant populations of native species such as bridled nailtail wallabies, koalas and tree kangaroos threatens their viability.

Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland (call 13 25 23 or visit our website at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au).