



Now answer the eight questions that follow the reading passage about the dingo.

The Dingo – An Australian Pest

The origins of the dingo are obscure and there is much controversy connected with this. It is not truly native to Australia but is thought to have arrived between 3,500 and 4,000 years ago. Whatever its origins, the dingo was a highly valued companion to the aborigines. They were hunting companions, guard dogs, and they kept them warm at night.

Some believe they were brought here on rafts or boats by the ancestral aborigines. It has also been suggested that they came with Indonesian or South-East Asian fishermen who visited the northern coast of Australia.

The dingo can be found in all areas of Australia – from harsh deserts to lush rainforests. The highly adaptable dingo is found in every habitat and every state of Australia, except Tasmania. In deserts, access to drinking water determines where the animal can live. Pure-bred dingo numbers in the wild are declining as man encroaches deeper and deeper into wilderness areas, often accompanied by his domestic dog.

The dingo is different from the modern dog in several ways: it does not bark, it has a different gait, and its ears are always erect. Dingoes are naturally lean and they are usually cream to reddish-yellow with white points, some are black with tan points. An adult dingo stands more than 60cm high and weighs about 15kg. It is slightly smaller than a German Shepherd.

In its natural state, the dingo lives either alone or in a small group, unlike many other wild dog species which may form packs. Dingoes have a clearly defined territory which they rarely leave and which they protect from other dingoes, but which may be shared with other dingoes when they form a group to hunt larger prey. The size of the home territory varies according to the food supply. Dingoes hunt mainly at night. Groups are controlled by a dominant male. Members of a group maintain contact by marking rocks and trees within their territory, and by howling, particularly in the breeding season.

The dingo's diet consists of native mammals, including kangaroos, although domestic animals and some farm stock are also on the menu. This makes the animal unpopular with farmers. The dingo is thought to have contributed to the mainland extinction of the thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) through increased competition for food.

The dingo is an intelligent animal. It is no more dangerous to man than any other feral dog. The natural prey of the dingo is small mammals and ground-dwelling birds, but with the introduction of white settlement, they became such a menace to sheep, calves and poultry that measures had to be taken in an attempt to control them, such as "dog-proof fences".

Dingoes start breeding when they reach the age of one or two but only the dominant members within an established group breed. They breed only once a year. Mating usually occurs in autumn/early winter and after a gestation of nine weeks (same as domestic dogs) a litter averaging 4–5 pups is born, which are reared in a hollow log, a rock-shelter, or an old rabbit warren. Both parents take part in raising the pups. The pups are fully grown at seven months of age. A dingo may live for up to ten years.

Wild dingoes are wary of humans and do not attack unless provoked. They will approach camps in the bush looking for food or perhaps out of curiosity. Dingoes can be kept as pets but should be obtained at a very young age to enable them to bond with humans. Even when raised from pups, they never seem to lose their instinct for killing poultry or small animals. Not all states in Australia allow dingoes to be kept as pets and a permit is required. The export of dingoes is illegal.

Dingoes and domestic dogs interbreed freely resulting in very few pure-bred dingoes in southern or eastern Australia. This threatens the dingo's ability to survive as a separate species. Public hostility is another threat to the dingo. Because it takes some livestock, the dingo is considered by many to be a pest.

Questions 1–8

Answer the questions below.

Choose NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage for each answer.

1. Who might have introduced the dingo into the country?
2. What main factor decides where the dingo can live in a desert?
3. In what three ways is a dingo different to a domesticated dog?
4. What determines how big an area they live in?
5. What animal might the dingo have helped wipe out?
6. What is the life expectancy of a dingo?
7. When is it better to have a dingo as a pet?
8. Because of public hostility, what is the dingo considered as?