

ORDER IN COUNCIL DECLARING THE DINGO TO BE UNPROTECTED WILDLIFE

Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. What is a Dingo?

The Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) was introduced to Australia about 5,000 years ago. The Dingo is the largest terrestrial predator in Australia. It is both culturally important to indigenous people and valued as an iconic Australian species.

Dingoes play an important role in the natural environment as a top-order predator, and are thought to suppress populations of introduced mesopredators (medium sized exotic predators such as foxes) through direct predation or increased predation risk, harassment and competition for resources.

2. Is the Dingo a threatened species in Victoria?

Yes, the Dingo is a threatened species under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and as a result is protected under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

3. What is being done in Victoria to protect the Dingo in the wild?

The Dingo is a protected species on most public land throughout Victoria. A Dingo Action Statement has been developed in consultation with major stakeholder groups. The Action Statement sets out the priority conservation actions for the Dingo in Victoria.

4. What does a Dingo look like?

The majority of Dingoes have a short ginger coat with white patches on feet, chest and tail tips. Dingoes can also have a black-and-tan, black or white coat.

5. What is a wild dog?

Wild dogs include free roaming feral domestic dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) and Dingo-dog hybrids (*Canis lupus dingo* x *Canis lupus familiaris*). A Dingo-dog hybrid is a domestic dog crossed with a Dingo.

Wild dogs and Dingo-dog hybrids are listed as established pest animals under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and landholders have a legal obligation to prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate them, on land they own or occupy.

6. Can I tell a Dingo from a wild dog or a Dingo-dog hybrid?

Pure Dingoes cannot be reliably visually distinguished from wild domestic dogs or hybrids, but genetic tests can distinguish between these three groups.

Original Order in Council (published 1 October 2010)

7. What does the Order in Council do?

Any wild dog or Dingo found on private land (or on public land adjacent to private land) has the potential to threaten livestock.

In Victoria, wild dogs are pest animals and can be legally controlled. However Dingoes are protected wildlife and it is an offence under the *Wildlife Act 1975* to take or kill protected wildlife without an authorisation to do so.

Dingoes are also visually indistinguishable from wild dogs, making it impossible to ensure they are not inadvertently destroyed in wild dog control programs in any given area where both exist.

In order to allow the continued control of wild dogs and Dingoes where they threaten livestock, an Order in Council (the original Order) was made under the *Wildlife Act 1975* on the 1 October 2010 to unprotect Dingoes in areas where they pose this problem.

The original Order unprotected Dingoes on all private land, on public land within 3km of any private land boundary and on public land within 3km of a perpetual lease property, across sections of the north-west and east of the state. Dingoes remained protected on all other public land across Victoria.

The amendments to the Order extend the Order for a further five years and remove an outdated section regarding perpetual leases on public land.

8. How does the Order affect wild dog control?

The Order ensures that farmers and public land managers are able to continue control of wild dogs, and Dingoes, in areas where they threaten livestock.

On private land, all Dingoes are unprotected and therefore can be controlled where they threatened livestock.

On public land, wild dog control work is concentrated within 3km of the private land boundary to prevent incursion of wild dogs onto private land.

9. If Dingoes are a threatened species and protected, why does the Order unprotect them?

Any Dingo found on private land (or on public land adjacent to private land) has the potential to threaten livestock. Land owners and managers need mechanisms to allow them to protect their livestock from wild dogs and Dingoes where they are threatened, without fear of being in breach of the law.

Without the Order, farmers and public land managers controlling wild dogs may inadvertently destroy a dingo in the process, which would be an offence in Victoria under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

It is important to remember that Dingoes remain protected on most public land across Victoria.

The Order is in place to enable effective protection of livestock from wild dogs and Dingoes in some areas of the state, whilst also ensuring the conservation of the Dingo on public land.

10. Because Dingoes are wild and can also kill livestock, why can't I just kill them too?

Dingoes are protected wildlife in some areas of the state and unprotected in others.

Where Dingoes are unprotected, on all private land and on public land within the 3km buffer zone in some areas of the state, they may be killed for the purposes of protecting livestock.

Where Dingoes remain protected, it is an offence to take or kill a Dingo unless with an appropriate authorisation issued under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

This reflects current Victorian Government wild dog control policy and ensures that the Dingo remains protected on most public land.

Amended Order in Council

11. Why was the original Order in Council amended?

The original Order, published on the 1 October 2010, was valid for a period of three years and expired on the 1 October 2013.

The original Order was amended so as to extend it for a further five years to allow wild dog and Dingo control to continue in Victoria in areas where they have been determined to be potentially threatening livestock.

12. What are the changes to the amended Order compared with the original Order?

The amended Order continues to unprotect the Dingo on all Victorian private land, as well as on public land within 3km of the private land boundary within the hatched area shown in Schedule 1 of the original Order.

The changes to the original Order are:

- The Order has been extended for a further five years to allow the control of wild dogs and Dingoes to continue in areas where they have been determined to be potentially threatening livestock
- There are no longer any lands subject to a perpetual lease within the hatched areas of the state. Reference to perpetual lease land within the original Order is now redundant and as such has been removed from the original Order to avoid any ambiguity.
- The amendment to the Order also included corrections for a few minor administrative errors.

13. When will the Order now expire?

The amendment to the Order means it will now expire on the 1 October 2018.

14. Why have the references to perpetual lease properties been removed from the Order?

The original Order specifically referenced perpetual leases occurring within the hatched area shown in Schedule 1 of the Order. Under the original Order, perpetual lease holders within the hatched area were able to control Dingoes on that land within 3km of a private land boundary for the purposes of protecting livestock.

Recent information has confirmed that there are no perpetual lease properties within the hatched area. Therefore the reference to perpetual leased land within the hatched area in the original Order no longer has any effect, and has been removed from the Order to avoid any ambiguity.

Dingoes remain protected on public land subject to perpetual lease. Perpetual lease holders who wish to control dingoes on their property are required to obtain an authorisation under section 28A of the *Wildlife Act 1975* (known as an Authority to Control Wildlife or ATCW).

15. Does the amended Order allow the continuation of the current wild dog control operations on public land that is adjacent to private land but outside of 3km buffer zone?

Yes, it does. The Order does not prevent wild dog control on public land outside of the 3km buffer zone, provided the public land manager has the appropriate authorisation under the Wildlife Act and only if it is considered necessary to protect livestock.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) carries out the wild dog control program on public land under an authorisation issued under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, and in accordance with an approved Wild Dog Management Zone Work Plan.

16. Under the amended Order, can a person holding property subject to a grazing licence or agricultural college lease carry out wild dog control?

Agricultural college lease holders and grazing licence holders, if they are abutting private land and if within the hatched area shown in Schedule 1 of the Order, are able to control Dingoes on that land within 3km of a private land boundary.

Outside of the 3km buffer in the hatched area, Dingoes may be controlled if included in the Wild Dog Management Zone Work Plan works for the year (managed by DELWP) or if an authorisation (ATCW) under section 28A of the *Wildlife Act 1975* is obtained.

If outside the hatched area, Dingoes remain protected on properties subject to an agricultural college lease or grazing licence, and an ATCW under the *Wildlife Act 1975* is required to control them.

17. How can I get a copy of the amended Order?

The amended Order in Council is available for download from the DELWP website at <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/our-wildlife/dingoes>.

18. Who was consulted about the proposal to amend the original Order?

The following committees and organisations were consulted during the development of the original Order and the recent amendment:

- Victorian Wild Dog Control Advisory Committee
- Dingo Care Network
- National Dingo Preservation and Recovery Program
- Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Victorian Naturally Alliance
- The Wilderness Society
- Representative of private dingo keepers.