



## Have you got wild dogs?

### Detecting the presence of wild dogs and their impacts:

It is common for wild dogs to be present in an area but go unnoticed or unrecognised. No matter what colour a free-roaming dog is, if it is not your dog it should be considered a wild dog. There are several indicators that suggest that wild dogs might be present in an area. Read through the indicators listed in the table, and follow the exercise outlined on the following page.



Wild dog tracks in sand dunes. Image: Ben Allen

Category	Potential indicator of wild dog presence	Score
1	free-roaming dogs seen or heard	10
1	wild dog footprints found in places where working dogs have not been used (eg around water points, road junctions, along animal pads, under holes in fences, newly graded tracks)	10
1	wild dog scats/faeces and scratch marks found in similar places (scats should contain hair, bones, scales, feathers, or insects)	10
1	livestock kills and damage, including bite marks or torn ears	10
2	unexplained livestock losses or low marking/branding/mustering percentages	8
2	unusually high percentages of cows not producing milk	8
2	the absence of young kangaroos and feral goats	7
2	kangaroos caught in fences when there has been no one present to disturb the mobs	7
3	sheep coming into water at a gallop and leaving in the same way (lead animal taking last animal back out before it has drunk)	5
3	changes in livestock or goat behaviour (eg stock no longer camping on the dam or grazing where they always have in the past)	5
3	sheep that won't work into the wind or visit good feed down one end of the paddock	5
4	kangaroos/livestock drowned in full dams	4
4	feral goat numbers lower than expected	4
4	crows following your working dogs	3
4	increased localised crow numbers	2
4	birds of prey in consistently rough, barren areas where you would not otherwise expect to find much food	2

## Are wild dogs present in my area?

Using the indicators described on the previous page, complete the following exercise:

1. Circle each of the indicators you have observed for your area.
2. Add up your scores separately for each category.
3. Locate your chances of wild dogs being present in the following table.

A score of 10 or more in Category 1	You definitely have wild dogs
A score of 15 or more in Category 2	You probably have wild dogs
A score of 10 or more in Category 3	You might have wild dogs
A score of 10 or more in Category 4	You might have wild dogs
One score/indicator each from Category 2, 3, and 4	You probably have wild dogs

Ask your neighbours to complete the exercise as well. If you think you have wild dogs, talk to your local pest animal authority.

## Distinguishing between wild dog, fox, cat and quoll tracks:

The presence of wild dogs is often discovered by seeing their tracks in the soil, but sometimes the tracks of other species look similar to those of wild dogs (see Figure 1). Wind, rain, organic matter in the soil and other factors can make it difficult to accurately identify some tracks or determine how fresh they are.

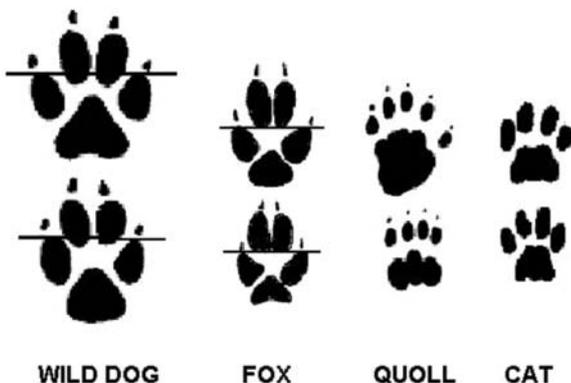


Figure 1: The relative size and shape of wild dog, fox, quoll and cat tracks.

The average size of wild dog footprints also changes throughout the year as pups become active and begin wandering around. For example, in late spring and early summer, some wild dog footprints (of pups) can be as small as those of foxes and it can be hard to tell them apart. By autumn and winter, all wild dog prints are usually much larger than foxes' prints (Figure 1).

The front foot length of adult wild dogs (excluding nails) is usually greater than 6 cm. When wild dogs, foxes and cats walk, their front foot hits the ground first and their back foot print usually lands nearby (see Figure 2).

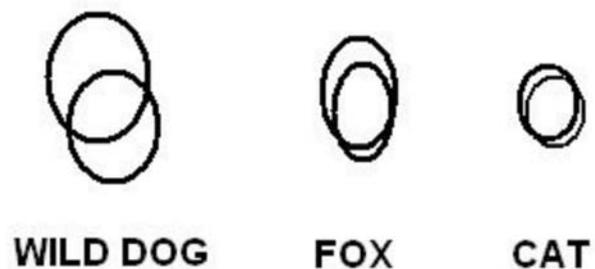


Figure 2: Usual foot print placement for wild dogs, foxes and cats

In good track-reading conditions in sand, silt, or mud:

- dog prints are usually larger and rounder, foxes' prints are smaller and more elongated, and cats' prints are small and very round
- dog toe nails usually point out straight, fox nails point inwards, and cats have no toe nail marks
- the back foot usually partly overlaps the front foot for dogs, mostly overlaps for foxes, and almost completely overlaps for cats
- the front foot of quolls shows all five toes (wild dogs, foxes and cats only show four).

## Further information:

For more information to help identify tracks and other signs of wild dogs and other animals see the book *Tracks, Scats and Other Traces: A Field Guide to Australian Mammals* (2004), by Barbara Triggs.

If you suspect that you have wild dogs in your area, talk to your neighbours and your local pest animal control authority.