



THE DINGOES (WONGARI) OF K'GARI (FRASER ISLAND)



BE DINGO-SAFE!

- Always stay very close to children.
- Don't walk alone. Walk in groups.
- Do not run.

Never feed dingoes.

It is an offence to feed or make food available to a dingo or intentionally attract or disturb a dingo anywhere on Fraser Island, whether on public or private land. Penalties apply.



WONGARI — WILD DINGO

Before European settlers came to K'gari (Fraser Island), two types of dingoes were known to the Butchulla. One was Wat'dha (the camp dingo) and the other was Wongari (the wild dingo). Wat'dha were our companions—always part of us. They helped us hunt and track, and protected us from bad spirits and the Wongari. Wongari have been and always should be wild. They are a natural and important part of the ecosystems on K'gari. Wongari are omnivores; they have an abundance of food here including rodents, reptiles, berries and other flora, and the remains of marine animals washed up on the beach.

Butchulla Rangers perform smoking ceremonies for Wongari that die by fault of humans, including vehicle strikes. This sends them home to Sky Country where Biral (Supreme White Spirit) is waiting with a message through the smoke, to ensure their spirit doesn't walk in limbo without an understanding of what happened to them. If they have been killed by another dingo or pack we do not interfere.

When the last of our people were taken off the island, all of the dingoes became wild, but we, the Butchulla, are still all strongly connected in our hearts, minds and spirits.

Respect Butchulla lore *“What's good for the country comes first”*. K'gari is Wongari Djaa (Country), and provides everything they need. They are curious, but need you to keep your distance. So please, don't feed Wongari.

Nyanga Buranga (look, listen-know).

Conway Burns, Butchulla man and
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Ranger



Wongari Dreaming Artist: Conway Burns



Photo: © Jenna Tappley

LIVING WELL AND WILD ON FRASER ISLAND

Seeing dingoes on Fraser Island is special because you can see them in their natural state. You may even see a pack going about their everyday lives.

Living wild means all of the island's wildlife populations can regulate themselves based on the availability of food, water and territory—a principle underpinning wildlife management here and throughout the world. The island provides a varied dingo diet, including fish, crabs, reptiles, echidnas, bush rats, swamp wallabies and bandicoots. They eat insects and berries, and feed on dead marine life or sea birds that have washed up on the beach.

A dingo pup greets the alpha female when she returns from hunting.

BE DINGO-SAFE!

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Rangers make all attempts to protect people and conserve dingoes. All of us—visitors, workers and residents on Fraser Island—can make a big contribution to keeping the dingoes living wild, which is the best thing we can do for dingo conservation.

Always stay within arm's reach of children, including small teenagers

Take safety seriously! Never let children sleep in a tent or camper trailer without adults or wander away on tracks, lakes and beaches. Keep house doors and low windows secure. Screen doors may need to be locked, as some dingoes have learnt how to open simple door latches.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Dingoes can appear as if from nowhere and they move quickly.
- You can't rely on children knowing what to do when they're scared.
- Dingoes have bitten and mauled people—even strong men!—and in 2001, a small pack killed a nine-year-old child.



Staying overnight with children?

Choose a fenced accommodation option when you have children (including small teenagers) with you.

DID YOU KNOW?

- QPWS has provided dingo deterrent fences around major camping areas, resorts and some townships.
- Fenced areas are marked on the Fraser Island Discovery Guide. 

Do not go for a run or jog outside the fenced areas



DID YOU KNOW?

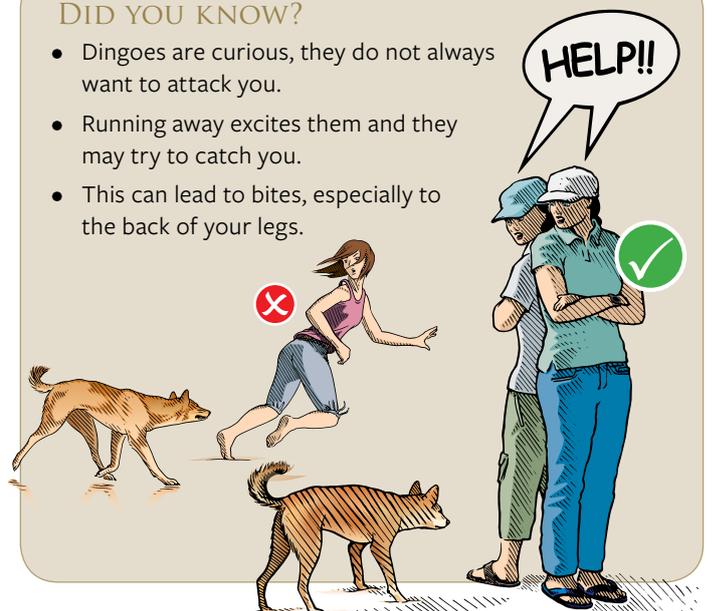
- You may not notice dingoes sitting in the sand dunes.
- Jogging and running stimulates dingoes' chasing instincts and once one starts to chase you, others may follow.

Do not run if dingoes come close

Stay calm, stand to your full height and face dingoes if they come close. If you are with others, stand back to back. Maintain eye contact and confidently and loudly call for help. Calmly move away from the dingo to a safe area, preferably a vehicle or fenced area. Do not run or wave your arms or feet at them.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Dingoes are curious, they do not always want to attack you.
- Running away excites them and they may try to catch you.
- This can lead to bites, especially to the back of your legs.



BE DINGO-SAFE! NEVER FEED DINGOES

One of the most important things we can do for the conservation of dingoes on Fraser Island is to never feed them. The island provides enough wild food for them.

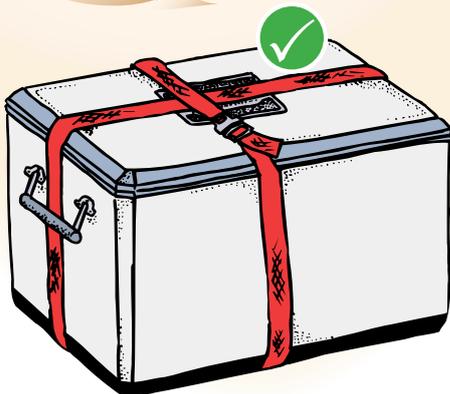
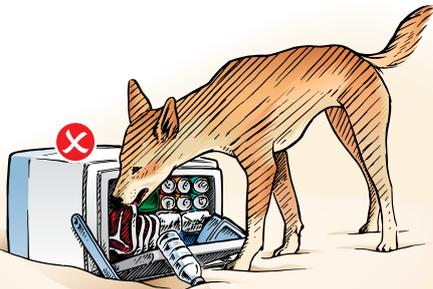
DID YOU KNOW?

- Some leaner dingoes—often juveniles or animals rejected from the pack—need to make their own way in life, and not rely on hand-outs from people. This is all part of living wild.
- Every natural meal a dingo eats builds its strength and increases its survival ability.
- Every hunt increases its fitness and skill to live wild.



Keep food (and rubbish) containers firmly strapped

Dingoes are always on the prowl for food and will chew through or tear into anything—unsecured iceboxes, tents, thin plastic boxes, plastic bags—when following the scent of food. Secure storage and iceboxes with heavy-duty straps.

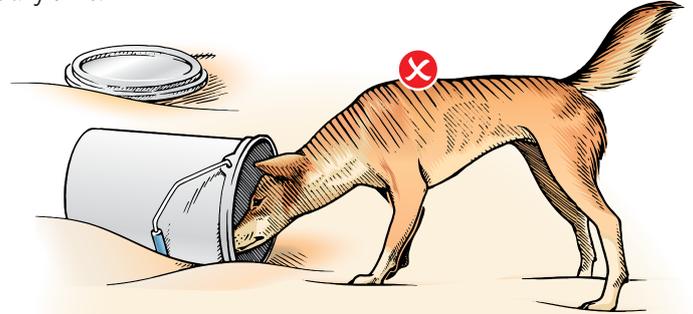


DID YOU KNOW?

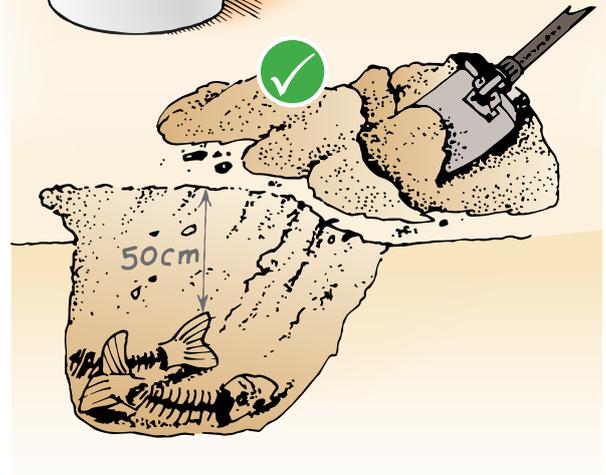
- A dingo's nose is 14 times larger and its sense of smell is thousands of times more acute than ours.
- Even tiny morsels of food left lying around the barbecue can attract them from quite a distance.
- They're enticed by anything with a food scent—dish cloths, wine casks, toothpaste, even unopened canned food and drinks.

Tips for the tidy fisher

Keep all fishing gear, bait, berley and catch that you're not using in a closed vehicle. Watch your back! Dingoes can appear at any time.



Keep bait and catch containers firmly sealed. Bury and cover fish remains in a deep hole.



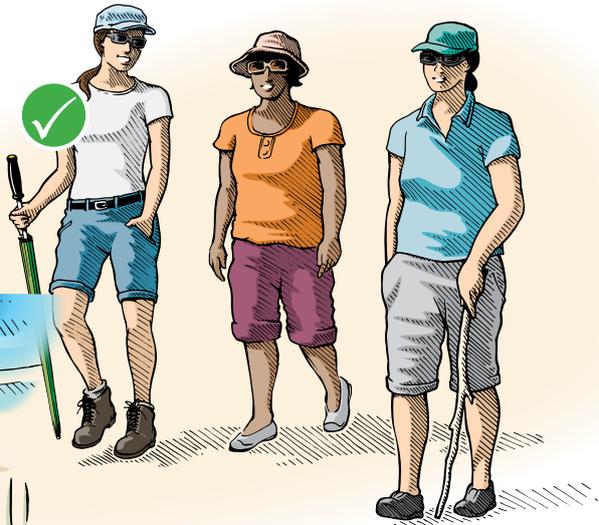
DID YOU KNOW?

- It is better to bury your fish scraps in a deep hole (just below the high tide mark), so there's at least 50cm of sand above the top of the scrap pile to the lip of the hole.
- It's best to do this when dingoes aren't around so they don't associate people with food.
- If they find the scrap hole on their own, it's a more natural discovery—just as if dead marine animals are washed up and covered over with sand by the last tide.
- Cleaning fish in camp sites is not permitted.
- **It is an offence to:**
 - hang bait or berley bags on the outside of vehicles, in trees or have these lying around.
 - throw any fish or fish remains and bait to dingoes or other wildlife.

BE DINGO-SAFE WHEN...

When you walk, walk in groups

Walk together, stay alert and carry a stick or umbrella for extra protection.



DID YOU KNOW?

- People walking or sitting alone have been threatened by dingoes.

When visiting lakes, take no food

No food or drinks (except water) to lake shores.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Dingoes visit lakes too and patrol the beach as part of their regular territorial patrols.
- Sitting down to a picnic on the shore of a lake or the beach puts you and food at 'dingo level'.
- Dingoes have bullied people, especially children or small teenagers, to get at food—a bad habit they can repeat, sometimes more aggressively—as new visitors come, placing them in greater danger.



When you're on the move, steer clear of dingoes

Dingoes are protected and roam freely on Fraser Island. Their movements are unpredictable. Stay alert, slow down and, if safe, stop to let them get out of your way. Unfortunately, some people have accidentally or deliberately hit dingoes with their vehicles. Report vehicle strikes and people who try to drive dingoes down. If possible get their vehicle registration number, take a photo, record their vehicle colour, the location and time of day. If the dingo is injured, do not attempt to touch it as it could bite you in fear. Report the incident to ph (07) 4127 9150.

DID YOU KNOW?

- They may not be able to hear your vehicle over the sound of wind and surf.
- They often use inland roads and tracks as pathways.
- They can suddenly appear from camping areas, between vehicles or over dunes.



When it's time to take the rubbish out, be tidy

QPWS provides bulk bins for campers' rubbish. These are in fenced waste transfer stations along the eastern beach. Please keep them tidy. Loose rubbish can fly about and end up in the ocean, as well as attracting dingoes and other wildlife.

- Put your rubbish in the bin not alongside them.
- If a bin is full, use another.
- Ensure the lids are all closed before you leave.

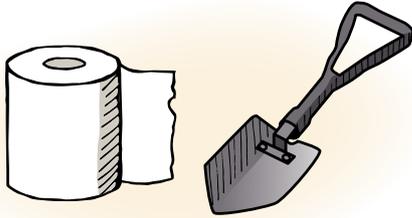


When nature calls, never go alone



Toilets are provided across Fraser Island. Try to use them and avoid bush toileting unless absolutely necessary.

If you need to go to the toilet in the bush, never go alone; especially at night! Have someone, standing a little way off keeping a look out for dingoes. To bush toilet, dig a hole at least 50cm deep and when finished, cover your waste and the used paper immediately afterwards.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Dingoes have dug up shallow bush toileting sites.
- It is a lot safer and more hygienic to bring and use a portable toilet if camping away from facilities.
- QPWS provides five disposal points just for portable toilet waste. Look for this symbol on your Fraser Island Discovery Guide map. 

When staying in houses, secure doors and windows

Ensure house doors and low windows cannot be pushed open. Store rubbish in lockable containers and bin everything as soon as possible. Lock rubbish bin lids or store bins inside a closed garage, laundry or secure outdoor bin enclosure. Clean up any barbecues, food spills and containers as soon as possible.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Dingoes wander all over the island, including backyards and unfenced townships.
- Some dingoes have nosed screen doors open and entered houses.



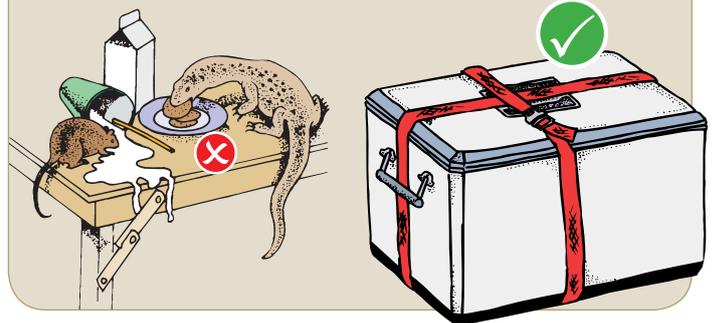
Photo: © Maris Tan

When you're inside the fence, it's still an offence

Get into good camping habits everywhere on Fraser Island. **It is an offence to feed or make or leave food available for wildlife, regardless of being inside or outside a fenced area.**

DID YOU KNOW?

- Wildlife lives best on wild foods.
- Kookaburras, currawongs, goannas and butcher birds are the usual species that pester people for handouts.
- You should never feed wildlife... not even once... not even a crumb... not even in a fenced area.



When you're leaving a fenced area, close the gate

Think safety! Use the pedestrian gates and never walk over the car grids. Ensure gates are closed after you leave and never prop gates open. Please report any faulty gates to QPWS Rangers.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Fences were installed by QPWS to protect people, but also to protect dingoes.
- Fences can break the habituation sequence, which can lead to a dingo having to be humanely euthanised as it has become a risk to people, sadly because of the carelessness of some people.
- Negative dingo incidents have been greatly reduced since the dingo deterrent fences went up.



Walkers stay out of traffic lanes. Use the gates not the grids.

ABOUT DINGOES

Dingoes are not domestic pets

They live wild and don't obey commands from people. Once a dingo starts to lose its wariness of people, its behaviour can quickly lead to trouble for people and the dingo.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The sequence of events from feeding dingoes to serious dingo aggression or an attack doesn't take very long; sometimes only a matter of days.



ATTRACTION

People leave food out. Dingoes are attracted to food, food smells, drinks, rubbish and odd things like sweets, cooking oil, tea towels, dish cloths and toiletries.

HABITUATION

Dingoes that lose their natural fear of humans will ignore threats and come close to people. Habituated dingoes expect food from everyone. Pups of habituated dingoes may not be taught to hunt properly.

INTERACTION

Negative interactions
People try to encourage dingoes to come closer or feed them. Dingoes try to dominate or steal food by aggression.

Positive interactions
People leave dingoes alone. Dingoes shy away from people, cars or buses.

Neutral interactions
People keep a good distance from dingoes. Dingoes may display habituated behaviour, but keep their distance or walk away.

AGGRESSION

People get involved with dingoes that are feeding, roaming or being aggressive. Dingoes—individuals or as a small pack—are displaying aggression when they actively stalk or circle people, lunge at them, nip or bite savagely. **Dingoes are capable of killing people.**



Dingoes may be seen searching for food around camp sites and high visitation areas. Keep food secure and let them live wild.



Aggression can quickly turn to attack. Please report any instances of aggressive dingoes to QPWS Rangers as soon as possible.



Dingo bites are serious. This person may have been a victim of someone else's careless or deliberate actions, causing the dingo to become aggressive.

DINGO LANGUAGE

What to watch for in dingo language

Dingoes have been known to chase joggers and interact with children playing. What appears as playful dog behaviour to us, can be serious dominance testing by the dingoes, which can lead to aggression.

Photo: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt



Dingoes staring determinedly, bared teeth and snarling are signs of low-intensity threats, but can become serious in an instant.

Photo: Jenna Tapply © Queensland Government



An aggressive dingo ready to attack, is in a high state of aggression, standing tall in the hind legs, tail up and curled and often ears folded back or down. This dingo was in the middle of a territorial fight with an intruder.



Watch out! This dingo is approaching in a dominant stance—head down but staring determinedly, ears forward and alert and tail curled up.



Scent marking is done with urine or faeces, often while displaying dominant stance and staring at the intruder.

Photo: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt



Howling is sophisticated dingo language. It's not only about communicating with their own pack, but can be a warning to others.

Photo: © Marcus Toyne



Just padding along, showing no signs of threat.

Packs have rules

A dingo pack has a natural hierarchy, with alpha animals being the fittest and strongest. The social structure of dingo packs can mean some individual dingoes are denied food by the alphas, sometimes regardless of how much is available. These are pack rules and the younger or weaker pack members can appear particularly lean for a while. Some manage to find food themselves and soon put on weight, but as nature dictates, some don't survive.



A pack on the go. Dingoes live very active lives, running or trotting up to 40 kilometres a day, patrolling their territories, hunting and sometimes having family disputes.

DINGO IDENTIKIT

Help conserve dingoes; report interactions and sightings

Dingoes don't all look the same. They have different markings—socks, tail tips, scars—which help rangers identify the animal. If you're safe, take a photo or short video of the dingo's behaviour. Here's a few things to look for.



Tags help identify a dingo and could save its life

Some dingoes become so aggressive towards people, that they must be euthanised as they pose an unacceptable safety risk. Sometimes this can be avoided as dingoes can be steered away from this end result, if QPWS Rangers are alerted to any problems early enough.

Rangers can recognise some dingoes on the island, but tagging them ensures they identify individual animals and, in the long term, this helps to conserve them by guiding dingo management. Rangers monitor their movements, their pack membership, feeding and breeding patterns. Often, the dingoes are filmed on motion-activated cameras and tagged dingoes are more easily recognised. Rangers are interested in any interactions, positive, neutral or negative, you have with dingoes, and information and photos or videos can be sent to dingo.ranger@npsr.qld.gov.au

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ear tagging dingoes is just one of many monitoring tools.
- Rangers capture the dingo, sedate and tag them, and record their size, weight and distinguishing features.
- Not every dingo is ear-tagged, and those that are, have a minimum weight of approximately 10kg, are of reasonable body condition and exhibit, or are anticipated to exhibit, problematic behaviour.



Tagged dingoes are identified with their own individual tag attached to the left ear for males and right ear for females. The colour and number on the tag is what QPWS Rangers are looking for.

Photo: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt

DINGO CALENDAR

Dingoes' natural behaviour changes throughout the year. They are more aggressive in autumn and summer, when they are vying for dominance over other dingoes in the pack and competing for food.

AUTUMN (March–May)

Mating is a time for testing dominance, protecting territories and expelling intruders from other packs. Females will find dens, have pups and keep them hidden. Dingoes only have one litter per year, so this is a pack's one chance to grow another generation of wild dingoes.



WINTER (June–August)

The female dingo needs to find food for herself and her pups. Although the whole pack pitches in to help, you might see an alpha male on 'pup duty', while the others are hunting. They are naturally protective of pups and potentially aggressive. Never get between adults and pups!



SPRING (September–November)

Pups are growing up and venturing further away from their dens. They stay close to their parents, but sometimes are left in a safe place while the adults hunt for food. They haven't been abandoned, they're just too small yet to keep up with the pack. This is a vulnerable time for them, as they need to learn how to be wild dingoes that can fend for themselves.



SUMMER (December–February)

Pups learn pack rules quickly and practise through play. Little growls, howls and dominance-testing, roll-overs and push-overs are all life lessons for these juveniles. The more dominant sibling often fends off the weaker ones for food and lets them know its status in the pack. So what looks like a game to us, is earnest 'dingo lingo'. Never engage with dingoes. We don't understand how to speak their language and could end up in trouble if we give them the wrong impression.



Photo: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt

ABOUT DINGO MANAGEMENT

Dingoes are protected wildlife

Dingoes are protected across Queensland's national parks, conservation parks, recreation areas and lands in marine parks. These dingoes are defined under the various Acts as 'wildlife' or 'native wildlife' and should be left to live wild. They should never be confused with or treated as domestic dogs. In fact, dingoes cannot be kept as pets in Queensland at all.



Photo: Matt Lowry © Queensland Government

Dingoes on Fraser Island are important

Dingoes on Fraser Island have rarely interbred with domestic or feral dogs and, in time, may become one of the purest strains of wild dingo on the eastern Australian seaboard, possibly Australia-wide. Their conservation is of national significance. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's whole-island management helps to maintain Fraser Island's wild dingoes as a viable healthy population and to play their part as apex predators. That means leaving them free to roam, hunt and live as wild dingoes, not semi-domesticated, pet-like animals relying on hand-outs.

No feeding; it's the law

On Fraser Island, it is an offence to feed or make food available to a dingo or intentionally attract or disturb a dingo, whether on public or private land. Large fines and possible jail sentences can apply. Please obey this law and contribute to the conservation of the dingoes on Fraser Island, so that their future is assured and they can live wild and well.

Why dingoes don't need your food

Dingoes are a necessary component of Fraser Island's natural ecosystems and feeding them interrupts a natural balance. In the past, many of the island's dingoes lost their 'wildness' and became reliant on food thrown to them by people or scrounged for in dumps, around houses or camping areas. Some were injured by carelessly disposed-of rubbish and became ill from the poor diet. Their pack hierarchy broke down, leaving some as loners, which in lean times resulted in them becoming aggressive towards people.

QPWS management is about minimising risk

The Fraser Island Dingo Conservation and Risk Management Strategy (FIDCRMS) guides management for a sustainable wild dingo population while minimising risk to people and dingoes.

The strategy focuses on:

- effectively building and disseminating knowledge
- adopting the highest standards of animal welfare practices
- engaging local communities and tour operators to support and incorporate best practice in their businesses and day-to-day lives
- fostering safe wildlife experiences for all.

Adapting to change

Dingoes are remarkable hunters and scavengers, and have adapted readily to changes in island management, including intensive visitor education, fencing and limiting their access to people's food and rubbish. This reduces scavenging around camping and day-use areas, and rubbish tips, which decreases health risks to dingoes. Studies indicate that dingoes on Fraser Island are, on average, healthier than mainland dingoes. These days, the majority of dingoes are active around their usual dawn and dusk periods, hunting and scavenging for natural prey within their territories all over the island and its beaches.



Dingoes are natural hunters and opportunistic scavengers.

Photos: Jenna Tapply © Qld Govt



WHEN DINGOES COME CLOSE

If you or someone else has been injured by a dingo...

Call Triple Zero (000) and get immediate medical help.

Non-urgent medical: 13 12 33

Reporting an injured or dead dingo: (07) 4127 9150

Reporting negative incidents (including people doing the wrong thing): (07) 4127 9150

or email: dingo.ranger@des.qld.gov.au

- Tearing tents
- Stealing property
- Circling, lunging or chasing people
- Bailing up or 'herding' people into the ocean.
- Nipping or biting people
- Savagely attacking

WHEN ON K'GARI (FRASER ISLAND)

Be dingo-safe!

- ✓ Never feed dingoes.
- ✓ Always stay within arm's reach of children, even small teenagers.
- ✓ Walk or sit in groups.
- ✓ Do not run or jog.
- ✓ Camp in fenced areas when possible.
- ✓ Lock up food stores and iceboxes (even on a boat moored close to shore).
- ✓ Never store food or food containers in tents.
- ✓ Secure all rubbish, fish and bait.



If you feel threatened by a dingo

- Stay calm.
- Stand up to your full height.
- Face the dingo.
- Keep your arms close to your body, and keep facing the dingo.
- Calmly back away to a safe area, preferably a vehicle or fenced area.
- If in pairs or a group, stand back to back.
- Confidently call for help.
- Do not run or wave your arms.



CONNECT WITH QUEENSLAND NATIONAL PARKS



des.qld.gov.au/park-alerts (access, closures and conditions)

To report any dingo incidents:



(07) 4127 9150

email: dingo.ranger@des.qld.gov.au

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