

Save Fraser Island Dingoes Inc.

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The Fraser Island dingo. Conservation and Controversy.

A scientific report published earlier this year suggests that all is well for the dingoes of Fraser Island, the study claims that the vast majority of dingoes are in good to excellent physical condition even to the point of being overweight.

Whilst this research sheds some light regarding the dingo diet, there are aspects of this paper that require scrutinizing.

The data collected, including anecdotal and unpublished observations, dates back to 2001, there have been significant changes in the past 15 years, therefore, is this an accurate reflection of the animals today?

The report claims that actions taken by government agencies have always been in the interest of dingo welfare, clearly management decisions have impacted the dingo population over the years but certainly not always in the interest of dingo welfare.

In 2001 over 30 animals were culled and since that time many dingoes have been destroyed leading to concerns regarding the viability of a sustainable population. The Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS) was also released in 2001, controversial recommendations included prohibiting animals from foraging on the beach and this was enforced by hazing (shooting animals with clay pellets). Marine strandings were also disposed of preventing animals from feeding on carcasses.

If this report is accurate and fish, including marine mammals, are a significant part of the dingo diet, it must be concluded that from 2001 to 2013, animals along the Eastern Beach were denied access to an important natural food source.

Due to lobbying of successive governments Save Fraser Island Dingoes Inc. was instrumental in instigating a review of the FIDMS and in 2013 a revised strategy was released which included the cessation of hazing. Although there have been beneficial changes to management practices since the implementation of the Fraser Island Dingo Conservation and Risk Management Strategy it is important not to overlook or ignore the mistakes of the past so that these mistakes are not repeated in the future.

According to this report the mean adult body weight for dingoes > 12 months old is ..16.6 kg overall, but Right to Information records indicate a substantial number of animals well below this weight. It also should be noted that there is no reference in this report to the sample size of animals examined.

Whilst all research adds to our knowledge base there still remains a vast lack of data on Fraser Island dingo ecology. Further studies are necessary before we can assume the Island is a happy and healthy playground for the dingo population.

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299421798_Insects_for_breakfast_and_whales_for_dinner_The_diet_and_body_condition_of_dingoes_on_Fraser_Island_K'gari