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New Classification of the Dingo and New Guinea Singing Dog

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) formerly included the Dingo and New Guinea Singing Dog in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) definition of “dog,” and regulated these animals under the standards for the humane handling and care of dogs (Subpart A).¹ In 2003, the dog was reclassified from *Canis familiaris* to *Canis lupus familiaris*, and the Dingo and New Guinea Singing Dog became classified as *Canis lupus dingo*.^{2,3} Based on these changes, USDA will now include the Dingo and the New Guinea Singing Dog in the regulatory definition of “exotic animal,” and regulate these animals under the standards for all “other animals”(Subpart F) along with the coyote or African Wild Dog.

This document replaces the July 14, 1993, memo entitled “Regulation of the Dingo, Canaan Dog, New Guinea Singing Dog, and the Carolina Dog under the Animal Welfare Act.” (Note: The Canaan Dog and the Carolina Dog remain classified as *Canis familiaris* or *Canis lupus familiaris*, and continue to fall in the regulatory definition and standards for “dog.”)

Factors considered:

The AWA (7 U.S.C. § 2132(g)) and Code of Federal Regulations (9 C.F.R. § 1.1)¹ define “animal,” “dog,” and “exotic animal,” as follows:

- *Animal* means any live or dead dog, cat, monkey (nonhuman primate mammal), guinea pig, hamster, rabbit, or such other warm-blooded animal, as the Secretary may determine is being used, or is intended for use, for research, testing, experimentation, or exhibition purposes, or as a pet; ...”
- *Dog* means any live or dead dog (*Canis familiaris*) or any dog-hybrid cross.”
- *Exotic animal* means any animal not identified in the definition of “animal” provided in this part that is native to a foreign country or of foreign origin or character, is not native to the United States, or was introduced from abroad...

The Dingo is a wild dog native to Australia and Thailand, and the New Guinea Singing Dog is a wild dog native to Papua New Guinea.⁴ Although the Dingo and New Guinea Singing Dog are descended from the same prehistoric dog ancestor as domesticated dogs,⁶ the animals have a long history of isolation and of living independently from humans.⁴ The resulting genetic differences currently appear to be accepted by most of the scientific community as being sufficient to classify them as a separate subspecies.

The currently most accepted taxonomic classification for both the Dingo and the New Guinea Singing Dog is *Canis lupus dingo*.² When New Guinea Singing Dog is classified separately from the Dingo, the classification is usually *Canis lupus hallstromi*.⁵

References

1. Animal Welfare Act and Regulations (Blue book)
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/Animal%20Care%20Blue%20Book%20-%202013%20-%20FINAL.pdf
2. International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature,
https://archive.org/stream/bulletinofzoolog602003int/bulletinofzoolog602003int_djvu.txt
3. Wilson and Reeder's Mammal Species of the World,
http://vertebrates.si.edu/msw/mswCFApp/msw/taxon_browser.cfm?msw_id=11374
4. <http://www.carnivoreconservation.org/files/actionplans/canids.pdf>
5. <http://www.eol.org/pages/10564679/names>
6. The Dingo may be derived from the New Guinea Singing Dog,
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3386486/>