

Agriculture Protection Board
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RED KANGAROO and EURO



1. Red Kangaroo Adult female 2. Euro Adult female

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RED KANGAROO and EURO

RED KANGAROOS (*Macropus rufus*) and Euros (*M. robustus*) are declared animals under the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act. The population of these animals increased in some areas following the changed conditions which resulted from European settlement. This was due to improved access to water, and the control of predators, mainly dingoes, the displacement of tribal aborigines and reduced numbers of prospectors. However, numbers have been reduced as a result of overgrazing and commercial exploitation in other areas.

Kangaroos are protected animals in W.A. and their numbers are regulated under the Kangaroo Management Programmes. These have been drawn up jointly by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Agriculture Protection Board. The management plans are revised at intervals in the light of current population levels. The aim is to manage the population so that the species is not endangered while at the same time preventing unacceptable damage to rangeland.

RED KANGAROO

In Western Australia, the Red kangaroo is found inland of the 330mm rainfall isohyet in the south and of the 500mm isohyet in the north. It prefers open plains with some scattered trees or shrubs for shelter.

Description:

Red kangaroo males have velvety reddish brown fur with a paler underside. Most females have similar colouring with a lighter underside but some are bluish grey. The tail of both sexes is paler towards the tip and there is generally a black mark surrounded by a white mark on the sides of the muzzle. Adult males are much larger than adult females, averaging 50kg compared to 24kg.

EUROS

Euros are found in rocky areas throughout most of Australia

except the tropics and the higher rainfall districts. They shelter in the shadow of rocks and caves during the heat of the day.

Description:

Euros have longer hair and are stockier than Red kangaroos. They have a black tip to their tails and paws. In W.A., males are a rusty red or chestnut colour while the females are lighter. Adult males average about 35kg. They are much bigger than adult females which average about 17kg.

Reproduction:

Kangaroos are marsupials, therefore they do not develop a placenta.

The young of Red kangaroos and euros are born after a short gestation period of about 33 days, while still at a very early stage of their development. At birth they climb from the birth canal to the mother's pouch and attach themselves to a teat. After about six and a half months they begin to leave the pouch for increasing periods of time, until they are no longer dependent on it at about eight months of age. They continue to suckle from outside the pouch for up to three months or more. Females of both these species of kangaroo may hold an embryo dormant for up to seven months. Development is recommenced when a joey is lost or the previous joey is nearly ready to leave the pouch. The female comes on heat and mates again soon after the previous joey has been born. Under good conditions a female may have a joey still suckling at foot, another in the pouch and a dormant embryo. This complex reproduction system is an adaptation to periodic droughts.

Under dry conditions dormant embryos recommence development to take the place of joeys which die, but prolonged drought may cause the reproductive cycle to cease altogether, only to resume shortly after the drought breaks.

Environment:

Red kangaroos and euros live in areas where temperatures in excess

of 40°C are common in summer. They survive these high temperatures by the use of shade and by avoiding activity during the day.

Kangaroos regulate their body temperature largely by panting and licking their forelegs. They sweat very little except after exercise. They concentrate their urine to conserve water and can tolerate severe dehydration.

Food:

Kangaroos have only a single stomach but bacterial fermentation within the stomach is important to digestion of fibre, as in ruminants. Euros, but not Red kangaroos use protein and energy efficiently and are well adapted to existence on low protein feed. Studies in Western Australia have shown that the major impact of Red kangaroos on stations is during droughts when they naturally concentrate on the best feed such as saltbush, which is high in protein and is also needed for the breeding flock. This is critical to station management; although at other times kangaroos and sheep do not compete for food to the same extent.

Ecology:

Apart from man, the only important predator of kangaroos is the dingo. Controlling the dingo population appears to permit kangaroo numbers to build up more quickly when seasons are favourable.

Red kangaroos are most plentiful in areas with a good grass and herb cover where some trees or shrubs are available for shade. Euros prefer the shelter of rocks or caves. Red kangaroos may migrate long distances when food is scarce.

For up-to-date information on kangaroo management programmes contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Jarrah Road, South Perth, W.A. 6151. Telephone (09) 367 0111 or any country office of the APB or Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.