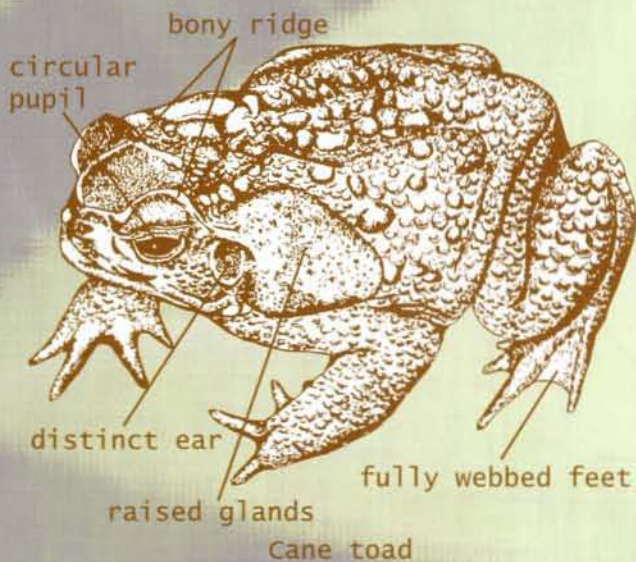


mistaken identity

It is easy to mistake a cane toad for some of our native frogs. Cane toads can be up to 150mm long, but most of the frogs that look similar to cane toads are smaller. Cane toads can also be identified by their distinct ears, raised poison glands and fully webbed feet.

For more information and identification advice call 8999 4536.



Giant frog - up to 100mm, distinct ear, horizontal pupils and feet not webbed.



Marble frog - up to 55mm, indistinct ear, horizontal pupils and feet partially webbed.



Northern spade foot frog - up to 55mm, indistinct ear, horizontal pupils and feet partially webbed.



Ornate burrowing frog - up to 45mm, indistinct ear, circular pupils and feet partially webbed.

cane toads: the facts



Meet *Bufo marinus*, also known as the cane toad. People in Queensland and northern New South Wales have been living with these warty creatures for years - and now those of us in the Top End of the Northern Territory have to learn to live with them too.



Northern Territory Government

Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment

When will cane toads be here?

Cane toads are already in Kakadu National Park, Katherine and Pine Creek. They will probably reach Darwin this wet season.

How can I recognise a cane toad?

The cane toad has warty skin, raised poison glands on its shoulders, a high bony ridge over its eyes, circular pupils and can be up to 150mm long. If it's smaller than 55mm and has no bony ridge, it could be an ornate burrowing frog, a marble frog or a northern spade foot frog. Cane toad eggs are in long strands of clear jelly, not clumps like frog eggs. If you are unsure, check with Parks and Wildlife.

What effect will they have?

Cane toads are prolific breeders and poison most animals that try to eat them. Many native animals will die and some species may become much rarer, possibly even extinct in their regions. We will see cane toads (dead and alive) on roads, in parks and gardens and in bodies of water like drains and swimming pools. Once their presence has peaked after a couple of years, we won't see quite so many of them.

What about my pets?

Cats are usually too cautious to attack cane toads, but dogs may try to eat them. If the dog is taken to a vet straight away, it will probably survive. Cane toads love eating pet food, but they won't poison it.

Can I keep them out of my backyard?

Installing a 500mm high barrier of fine mesh or smooth sheeting around your perimeter (including the gate) could help to keep them out. Cane toads are poor climbers, but they can burrow a bit, so you will need to sink the barrier about 150mm into the ground. You will also need to watch out for toads that enter through your gate.

Should I kill them if I see them?

You can reduce numbers of cane toads on your property by killing any that you see. The most humane way is to use a plastic shopping bag to pick the toad up, double bag it, tie it tightly and freeze it overnight. You can then bury it or put it in your wheelie bin. Make sure you really do have a cane toad first!

Is there anything else I can do?

Avoid leaving containers of water around for toads to breed in. Keep your pet's food out of reach. If you have a pond, remove any cane toad eggs you see. Be careful you don't accidentally help cane toads travel: they are great hitchhikers and will find their way into pot plants, trailers and swags.

Will our water supply be safe?

Cane toads don't poison water just by being in contact with it. Because they can't climb, they can't get to above-ground water tanks or most stock troughs.

What is the government doing about cane toads?

Unfortunately, at this time no one knows of a way to stop cane toads advancing.

The NT Government is:

- working with indigenous traditional owners to protect native species through the Island Ark program (vulnerable species like the northern quoll are moved to islands to keep them safe)
- taking steps to keep our offshore islands free of cane toads
- advising the community on living with cane toads
- researching the effects of cane toads on native animals.

The federal government is supporting CSIRO research into possible biological controls, but any solution to the cane toad issue is likely to be many years away.