

Name _____

Date _____

Reproductive Strategies

Animal Profile:

RED KANGAROO (*Macropus rufus*)

In the desolate, dry plains of central Australia, mobs roam around the countryside. But these aren't mobs of people. Mobs are actually the official name for groups of red kangaroos, *Macropus rufus*. And unlike angry mobs of people, mobs of red kangaroos aren't usually to be feared. They are skittish and will scatter when frightened. When they're really moving, red kangaroos can leap as far as 3.7 meters (12 feet) in one jump and reach speeds of 56 kph (34.8 mph)!

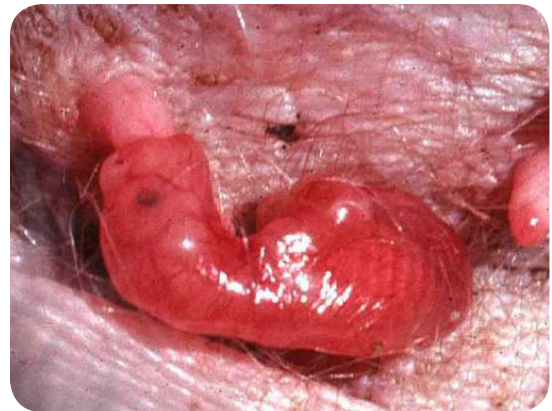


Chris Willis

A mother red kangaroo with a joey in her pouch.

Red kangaroos are one of the largest marsupials, and herbivorous mobs of them bounce about eating grasses and other vegetation. They're usually headed by the most mature female and include lots of other females and young kangaroos, called joeys. When it's mating time, males will sometimes box each other for females with their powerful jumping legs. The winning male deposits his sperm in the female, where an egg is fertilized.

After mating, females give birth to one baby kangaroo, which has only gestated for about 33 days. The young are very undeveloped after such a short time. Like most marsupials, baby red kangaroos spend a lot of time growing in their mom's pouches. When it's born, a young kangaroo is tiny, pink, hairless, and blind, but it knows to head straight for the pouch. It swims through mom's fur to get there, where it attaches to a nipple and finishes developing. After about 7 months, a joey gets too big for mom's pouch and will leave to bounce around next to her. Once this happens, the mom gives birth to another tiny pink baby. Females can continuously give birth and usually have about 3 joeys every two years.



Geoff Shaw - <http://kangaroo-genome.org.au>

A newborn kangaroo in its mother's pouch.