

The Urban Fox

What to do if they become a problem



Are they a nuisance?

- Foxes may overturn bins or rip open plastic refuse sacks, spilling the contents.
- Foxes may leave faeces in gardens or disturb flowerbeds.
- Nocturnal screams and barking may cause disturbance.
- Foxes may kill domestic pets, such as rabbits, small kittens and guinea pigs.



What can I do?

Whilst there are approved methods of controlling foxes (see Fox Control), these may prove costly and may not be very effective in the long term.

Chemical repellents are available for use against foxes and may be purchased from local gardening stores. Be sure to follow the instruction provided on the label.

The "Fox Project" can provide further information and assistance to householders on this subject. Telephone their "Fox Deterrence Help Line" on 0906 272 4411.

Biology of foxes	
January	The mating season. Peak dispersal period.
February	Vixen looks for breeding earth. Dispersal period ends.
March	Birth of cubs. Dog fox brings food to earth for vixen.
April	Cubs first emerge from the earth. Adults start to moult.
May	Cubs eating solid food. Adults busy hunting for cubs.
June	Breeding earth abandoned. Vixen finishes lactating.
July	Cubs lie up in brambles above ground. Adults bring cubs less food.
August	Cubs able to forage for themselves. Adults may lie up away from the cubs.
September	Cubs full grown and indistinguishable from parents.
October	Moult completed in adults. Fox family group starts to break up
November	Much more fighting between all foxes. Some sub-adults disperse.
December	Foxes very vocal and active defending territory as mating season approaches.

Fox control

Approved methods of fox control include trapping and shooting. A specialist pest controller should be consulted.

Prevention

- Do not leave food out. This could also encourage rats as well as foxes.
- Control the disposal of waste food on compost heaps. Use a composter bin. Make sure that household waste is properly disposed of, stored in lidded bins prior to removal.
- At night make sure domestic pets are securely fastened in a hutch or cage which is well above ground.
- Fox-proof fencing is also available although it is expensive to install. A specialist pest controller should be consulted.

Other questions answered

Why not feed foxes?

This will encourage them into your garden, which can cause several problems and their presence may disturb your neighbours. Foxes, like other wild animals, are well equipped to survive without our help in this way.

Should I try to rear an orphaned cub?

No. Do not be tempted to raise a cub yourself. Sometimes a cub is left behind when a vixen is moving her cubs from one site to another; if the lost cub is left alone she will often transfer it the following night. If you find this does not happen, contact the RSPCA who will be happy to help.

Could a fox breed with my dog?

It is a myth that foxes will breed with a domestic dog although it might be feasible for a dog and fox to mate. However, disparity in chromosome numbers means it is unlikely that there could be a successful outcome.

Do foxes spread diseases?

As foxes are part of the dog family, they can harbour many of the contagious diseases which can often affect the health of pet dogs. Most foxes have a variety of fleas and ticks but the most common disease which foxes are likely to transmit to man is Toxocariasis. This is caused by a parasitic roundworm in the fox, *Toxocara canis*, which can cause blindness in young children. The roundworm is excreted in the faeces and may be ingested by a child who comes into contact with this. Fox faeces should be removed and it must be ensured that children wash their hands before they eat.

What about mange?

This is caused by mites and results in irritation or loss of hair. Foxes can pass mange on to dogs if they frequent each other's living space. The mites live and breed in the skin of foxes and dogs. These mites can bite humans and cause skin irritation, but they cannot live or breed on human skin. Excluding the foxes and veterinary treatment for the dog will solve the problem in most cases. The "**Fox Project**" also operate a "**Canine Mange Helpline**" on **0906 272 4422**.

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