

PEST CONTROL ADVICE SHEET

FOXES



INTRODUCTION

The fox is a very social animal and is usually territorial. Depending on the size of the territory and food availability, anything up to seven adults can form the family group.

Foxes are usually active at dusk and dawn, but in quiet areas can be just as active during the day as in the night.

LIFECYCLE

The fox's lifecycle commences in January with its mating season. At this time complaints from its screaming at night reaches a peak. March is when the cubs are born and by April the cubs first emerge from the den. By August, the cubs are able to forage for themselves and by the end of September it is impossible to tell the adults apart from the cubs. In November and December there are increases in fox fighting and defending of their territory as the next mating season approaches.

CAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES CONTROL FOXES?

Controlling foxes is difficult, expensive and never successful. In the past, a number of local authorities tried this, particularly in London, but most have now given up any form of fox control. The problem is that foxes have been in urban areas for so long that they have reached a state of equilibrium and regulate the size of their own population. A large proportion of the foxes do not breed each year and litter sizes are comparatively small.

The moment you increase the mortality rate, the foxes compensate by increasing the number of vixens that breed, so you do not reduce the number of foxes in that area. What you do achieve, however, is a disruption of the fox population, so that new foxes move in and try to take over the territory. Invariably more than one fox moves in, there are fights over the territory and hence more noise and fouling of gardens.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

If you have foxes, then the following advice can be considered:

Remove the attraction

This method can produce the greatest control over the fox population at little or no cost.

1. Keep all refuse in wheelie bins or closed containers, NOT plastic bags.
2. Protect all animals and livestock.

- 3 Do not leave food out for other animals, e.g. cats, dogs, rabbits etc. Be careful where you put food to feed birds.

Habitats

Another reason for foxes being attracted to your garden is that it can provide a safe place to shelter. This may be overgrown or neglected areas or a void beneath a building. Voids can be protected using a heavy duty wire mesh.

Making it unacceptable

You can also try a suitable animal repellent. A range of products is available from garden centres, hardware and DIY stores.

Please note only approved products can be used and must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The use of non-approved products such as creosote and diesel oil is not permitted by law, and is also very dangerous to domestic pets.

FURTHER HELP

If you require further help or advice, you may find it helpful to phone the Fox Deterrence Helpline on 01892 826222 (24 hour recorded helpline).

Although the Fox Project is a wildlife group, they have developed a wealth of knowledge and expertise on fox deterrence. Their advice will vary according to the time of year and can also be tailored to your own particular situation.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Wildlife Aid Foundation at www.wildlifeaid.org.uk

Fox Project at www.foxproject.org.uk

National Fox Welfare Society at www.nfws.org.uk

DEFRA at www.defra.gov.uk