

URBAN FOXES

Where Do They Live?

Due to suburban development of their natural habitats, foxes are born and raised in built-up areas, and would struggle to survive in open country.

Foxes dens, called earths, have one entrance and one exit (bolt holes), and these are to be found under garden sheds, in dense undergrowth, or in banks of earth.

Why Doesn't The Council Control Them?

Controlling urban foxes is difficult, expensive and rarely successful. In the past, a number of local authorities have tried this, but most have 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. Experience has shown that when a fox is removed from an area it is soon replaced by one from a neighbouring territory. This may create more nuisance when foxes compete over the territory once occupied by another animal.

What Can I Do About Them?

If you are unfortunate to have foxes in your garden, then the following advice can be considered:

- Remove the attraction
- Habitats
- Make it unacceptable to the fox

Remove the Attraction

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

Urban fox populations are far greater than those in rural areas, mainly due to the fact that a far greater amount of food is readily available. The most likely reason for a fox to enter your garden is in the search for food, removal of the food source will reduce the attractiveness of your garden to the fox.

Suggestions of action you can take:

- 1 Keep all domestic refuse in wheelie bins or closed containers, NOT plastic bags.

- 2 Only put your refuse out on the morning of collection.
- 3 Protect all animals and livestock.
- 4 Do not leave food out for other animals eg cats, dogs, rabbits etc. Be extremely careful where you put food to feed birds, this should be in approved containers.

Habitats

Another reason for foxes being attracted to your garden is that it can provide a safe place to shelter by day or night. This may be overgrown or neglected areas or a void beneath a building. Voids can be protected using heavy-duty mesh (wild mesh). Holes measuring 2" (50mm) square are ideal, making sure that it is securely fixed to any building and buried to a depth of 12" (30cm) into the soil to prevent the fox burrowing under the mesh.

Making it Unacceptable

To prevent foxes using your garden, you can try a suitable proprietary animal repellent. A range of products are available from garden centres, hardware and DIY stores but please note only approved products can be used and they must be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. The use of non-approved products such as creosote and diesel oil is not permitted by law. The use of these types of non-approved products can be very dangerous to other pests such as cats and dogs. Prosecutions can result against anyone who is found using such products.

Your local garden centre, hardware or DIY store should be able to provide you with the correct advice on the most suitable product to use. A repellent product that is approved for use against foxes is **Scot containing aluminium ammonium sulphate**. Alternatively, you can purchase a scent neutraliser called Cat Off. This product reduces and neutralises the scents left behind by the fox from its faeces and urine.

Please note, any chemical used as a repellent is covered under The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 where it states that only approved chemicals may be used. All chemicals must be used safely and in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Other methods of keeping foxes at bay are ultra sonic devices and automatic water jet adapters, which connect to hose pipes.

Further Help

Further help and advice is available from the **Fox Project Advice Line** (tel 01892 826222, web www.foxproject.org.uk). This is a wildlife group with expert knowledge and expertise on fox deterrence. Their advice will vary according to the time of the year and can also be tailored to your own particular situation (there may be a charge).

