

Urban Fox

Profile/Characteristics

Foxes can live to 8 years or more, but the average lifespan is around 18 months. Vixens usually give birth to one family a year.

Foxes are mainly active at night and tend to lie in burrows known as earths or dens during the day. Urban dens may be found under sheds or greenhouses.

Problems caused by foxes

Foxes are becoming more common in urban areas. They are scavengers and will rummage through rubbish bags and compost heaps looking for food. They will also take advantage of food left out for birds, and can even get to bird feeders and fat balls hanging on trees.

A recent study has shown in urban areas there is a least 150 times more food available to foxes than in rural areas.

During June and July, cubs may dig up lawns looking for leather jackets (crane fly larvae) and earthworms. If blood, fish or bone fertilizer is used foxes may be attracted to this and try to dig up what they think is an animal carcass.

Foxes will attack rabbits, guinea pigs, poultry etc if they are not housed in secure coops. They can also attack cats and dogs, but this is much less common.

Foxes can often cause nuisance by their barking and screaming at night.

Foxes can suffer from mange, a highly contagious mite infestation resulting in irritation, loss of fur and in serious cases, death. There is some evidence that this may be transferred from foxes to dogs.



Foxes also carry parasitic worms (Toxocara), normally associated with dogs. This organism can occasionally cause blindness in humans, although there are no known cases of humans contracting toxocariasis from foxes. However, fox faeces should be removed from gardens as a precaution.

How to control Foxes

Fox populations are self-regulating and are limited by the availability of food and territory.

It is possible to reduce the nuisance by making your property less attractive to them. If a fox is visiting your garden, remove or protect whatever is attracting them.

Try to make sure that as little food as possible is left out. Food for small wild birds can be placed in purpose made feeders, and ideally, brought in at night. Refuse should be stored in sealed containers.

If you are still concerned about the presence of foxes, there are a number of dedicated organisations such as The Fox Project 01892 826222 - www.foxproject.org.uk or The Fox Website www.thefoxwebsite.org who can give advice on deterrents.

You could also contact the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999 who may be able to give you further advice.