

HISTORY

Foxes first colonised our cities in the 1930s. The low density housing, with relatively large gardens provided an ideal habitat for foxes in which they increased in numbers. Most cities in southern England have urban foxes and the fox population is now stable, contrary to popular opinion. There is in fact no distinction between urban and rural foxes.

NUISANCE

A female fox will scream to alert the male to her readiness to mate, and it is this screeching which people find most objectionable, however there is little that can be done to prevent this and it is only really a problem during the mating season. Foxes produce pungent urine and faeces to mark their territory and will also dig holes in lawns whilst foraging for earthworms – if blood or bone based fertiliser is used the holes will be bigger as the fox thinks a corpse has been buried. Foxes have become accustomed to living around humans and will often steal gardening shoes, gloves, toys and leather items to play with. However foxes will not usually attack either adults or children.

FOXES AND DISEASE

Foxes can suffer from both rabies and Weils disease, however rabies has not been found in the UK for many years and properly vaccinated pets are at no risk from contracting Weils. Mange is an infection of parasitic mites, which causes skin irritation and loss of fur. This disease can be transferred to pets (especially dogs), but is easily treated by a vet.

LEGISLATION

The Wild Mammal (Protection) Act 1996 protects most mammals from a variety of cruel acts, and hence it is illegal to poison, gas, trap or snare a fox. The live trapping and relocation of urban foxes may be illegal under The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960. Shooting is therefore the only approved method of control.

METHODS OF FOX CONTROL

Local authorities are not obliged to control foxes, however there are practical steps that can be taken to deter foxes and minimise the nuisance that they cause. However it is as well to remember that foxes are wild animals that are well adapted to urban life and it is extremely difficult to reduce the overall numbers of foxes within an area. Indeed they are now an established part of the urban ecosystem.

Remove the attraction

- Keep all domestic rubbish in sealed containers.
- Only put rubbish out on the morning of collection.
- Keep pets such as rabbits in secure enclosures.
- Do not leave food out for other animals
- Do not put food scraps on compost heaps.

Habitats

- Keep gardens well maintained.
- Ensure fencing is secure

To prevent foxes from entering a garden fencing should have a substantial overhang and be buried 30cms or so into the soil to prevent foxes both jumping over and burrowing underneath.

The use of repellent sprays which may be available from most garden centres will also discourage foxes. If foxes have already made a home in your garden then the application of a repellent around the entrance and exit to the earth (foxes invariably have both a front and back door) will encourage the foxes to relocate.



The Urban Fox – *Vulpes vulpes*



Haringey Council