

## FOX (*VULPES VULPES*)

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Foxes have adapted to thrive in urban environments. They have developed different behaviour to their rural counterparts and can often be found scavenging through bins for food. They are also generally much more bold than countryside foxes.

People have varying views on foxes and their status as a pest. We generally believe that foxes can live alongside humans in urban environments, and while their presence shouldn't be encouraged (feeding), as this can exacerbate their behaviour, they certainly shouldn't be persecuted. There are situations where action is needed and a fox may need to be removed from a site.

### BEHAVIOUR

Foxes are mainly active at night, and can often be seen foraging in cities after dark. They can also be seen in the daytime, particularly if there is a den nearby; the foxes can sun themselves or cubs can be seen playing together.

In urban areas most dens will be in less disturbed areas, such as along railway lines, in parks, cemeteries and on derelict land. Usually they aren't much of a problem, however they can make dens in gardens, particularly if these are overgrown, have a shed built on loose soil, or if the garden backs on to any of the above. Foxes can easily scale most garden fences.

Foxes have been given a bad name by the media; however in reality they are extremely unlikely to bite humans. If they do approach you this is likely because they have been fed in the past by humans, so they learn to associate all humans with an easy food source. However, a cornered/trapped fox can be dangerous. Please do not approach them, leave them an easy exit (open window/door) and they will leave the premises on their own.

### DIET

Foxes can feed on a wide variety of food sources, which can be dependent on the time of year. These can be natural, such as wild animals, insects, earthworms, as well as fruit and garden plants. They will also scavenge in urban environments, feeding from bins, food waste, as well as from bird tables and compost heaps.

In the countryside wild rabbits will comprise much of a fox's food source, this can comprise up to 75% of their diet.



### FOX LIFE CYCLE

**JANUARY:** This is mating season and peak dispersal period. Mating calls may be heard.

**FEBRUARY:** The vixen will seek a breeding earth and the main dispersal period ends.

**MARCH:** The cubs are born and the Dog fox will bring food to the earth for the vixen. May be increase in foraging from bins.

**APRIL:** Cubs will begin to emerge from the earth and adults will moult. Adults may be more defensive.

**MAY:** Cubs start eating solid food and the adults are kept busy hunting and foraging for food.

**JUNE:** Cubs will lie up above ground. Adults need less food for the cubs.

**AUGUST:** Cubs are able to forage for themselves.

**SEPTEMBER:** Cubs are full grown and indistinguishable from adults.

**OCTOBER:** Family groups will break up.

**NOVEMBER:** Fighting for territories occurs and dispersal period begins.

**DECEMBER:** Foxes are vocal and active defending territories in preparation for mating.

## CONTROL

Attempts to control urban foxes are rarely successful, mainly because they have been living in urban areas for so long that they have reached a state of equilibrium and can regulate the size of their own population. Most adult foxes do not breed each year and litter sizes are small, averaging at around five. The moment the population goes into decline (e.g. when humans start to kill the foxes), the previously non-breeding foxes compensate by starting to breed. So the number of foxes is not reduced at all and the problem is often made worse.

When the fox population is disrupted in this way, new foxes will move in and fight over the territories. However much of a nuisance a stable fox population is, it will be minimal compared to the damage caused by fighting foxes – they call noisily when fighting, claim their territories with urine and faeces, and this is also when they are most likely to attack domestic pets.

Fox control is also expensive. This is because there are few practicable methods of killing or removing the foxes. Shooting and snaring cannot be carried out safely in urban areas. The Protection of Animals Act (1911) prohibits the poisoning of foxes. As for live trapping, this rarely works due to the foxes' cunning and suspicious nature. Even if one fox is duped into entering a trap, any other foxes in its family group will learn from this mistake and will steer clear of the trap.

The preferable methods of control are to discourage or exclude foxes, rather than killing them. General noise in the vicinity of the den will also discourage foxes, the den can be dug over once the foxes have left, but this should be avoided during spring as the vixen may have left cubs. Fencing can be used to prevent foxes from entering site. It must be of a sturdy construction and at least 2m high with a 30cm overhang at the top and buried at least 30cm underground

## MICROBEE'S LIVE TRAPPING PROCEDURE

Firstly, Microbee does not carry out live trapping works if cubs are present. We will carry out live trapping visits to remove nuisance foxes, however if we accidentally trap a mother that has cubs it is a significant possibility the cubs will die without their mother; likewise if the cubs are caught and not the mother. We therefore will not carry out trapping until it can be confirmed the cubs have moved on.

To carry out live trapping, Microbee will attend the site and place a trap. This will be locked open and baited for a week allowing the foxes to become accustomed to the trap without the negative experience of being trapped.

This will increase the success of our trapping procedure.

Once a week of open trapping has been carried out, a technician will attend to set the trap with bait. We will also need to re-attend every Friday and Monday to un-set and re-set the trap as we will not leave them set over the weekend. If a fox is found caught in the trap we need to be notified as soon as possible. We will then attend as a matter of urgency to collect the trapped fox and release it appropriately.

Microbee will charge a call out for every visit to site.

We will also require the signature of the person on site responsible for checking the trap. We do this to ensure they understand their responsibilities as follows:

- To admit Microbee technicians to site as required
- To check the trap at least twice daily (am and pm)
- To re-bait the trap as required,
- To release (or notify Microbee to release) non-target species,
- To re-set the trap should it go off accidentally or trap a non-target,
- To notify Microbee via telephone as soon as a fox is caught



**CLIENT DECLARATION**

Dear Client,

Microbee has a responsibility to make sure our clients fully understand our instructions. We ask you to please read this Client Information Sheet and sign below to show that you have understood the information and instructions we have given.

PLEASE NOTE: Live trapping often attracts attention from tenants and the public. Please be prepared to deal with this from the site and retain this information for reference.

For additional support, please contact our office and our team will be happy to help.

020 8540 9968 [info@microbee.co.uk](mailto:info@microbee.co.uk)

I have read and understood the information and instructions on the Client Information Sheet regarding Foxes. I agree that I will check the trap at least twice a day, and I will call Microbee as soon as I discover a trapped fox to organise their removal.

Name (Printed)		Date	
Position at Property			
Signature			