

Fox Advice Sheet

What can you do to deter foxes?

You may be concerned about foxes living in or visiting your garden and about any potential risks that they might pose. While there is no real danger from foxes, some people would prefer not to share their garden with them, and understanding a little of their behaviour will help you deter them if you want to do so.

Killing foxes simply does not work, and the only winner will be the pest controller. Foxes are territorial; kill one and another will take his place. Most councils now concede that culling does not work and is costly to you, the taxpayer, and have concluded that there are better, humane ways to deal with them effectively.

Foxes are very well adapted to living in our urban and suburban environments but simple techniques designed to make your garden inhospitable to foxes can deter them. Fox numbers are self-regulating and no amount of culling will affect the population.

If you have a problem with foxes, it will usually be as a result of digging, fouling or noise.



Digging

Depending on the time of year, a fox will dig for a number of reasons: for food (insects and invertebrates); to create a safe, quiet earth in which to breed (often under sheds, patios and decking); to create a bolthole for safety; or just to find a route across his or her territory. They may also dig if they can smell fish or bone fertiliser, as they are looking for a non-existent carcass.

What you can do

You can deter foxes with a scent such as 'Get off my garden', 'Wash and get off' and 'Scoot fox repellent', which are widely available in garden centres and DIY stores. 'Get off my garden' is a harmless gel (designed specifically to repel animals), which can be sprinkled around the area to great effect. You can also block holes in fences and place obstacles in the way of well-used 'runs' or paths. Replace fish and bone fertilisers with plant-based ones.

If you do find you have a vixen and her cubs under your shed, for example, the noise from a radio left on in the shed might be enough to encourage her to move her cubs to her 'second' earth. Or soak some rags with a deterrent such as 'Get off my garden' and loosely block all gaps under the shed. Do not block the holes with bricks as this will prevent the female from getting to the cubs and they will starve to death. Each morning, replace the rags and straw in the hole. Once the rags or straw have not been moved for a couple of days, there will be no foxes left under your shed and you can permanently block the holes.

Fouling

Foxes are just like dogs; they scent-mark their territory with 'signposts' to tell other foxes who belongs and who doesn't.



What you can do

Because smell is so important to foxes, using an artificial smell is a great way of deterring them. Again, 'Get off my garden' is harmless and can be sprinkled wherever there is a problem. Foxes are creatures of habit and will have favourite 'lying up' spots, for sunning on lawns and hiding in bushes, for example. You can deter them from these areas with scent and obstacles.

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Noise

Foxes make most of their noise during the breeding season, which runs from late December to February and, as they are largely active at night, this can be antisocial. Each barking episode, however, is usually pretty short-lived and the breeding season lasts only a few weeks.

What you can do

Whilst it may be impossible to rid your neighbourhood of all fox noise, you can limit fox access to your garden or property by ensuring that there are no gaps under sheds or patios and that your garden is as inhospitable as possible. There are a number of repellents, deterrents and fox-proofing products available on the market – visit www.foxolutions.co.uk. But please note that it is an offence to use any product or chemical as a repellent unless it is labelled as such and used in accordance with instructions.

Contact

Foxes are naturally shy creatures who will do their utmost to avoid confrontations with people. The press sometimes demonises foxes for attacks that are later proven to be dog attacks. Foxes have bitten people but this is extremely rare and the risks are negligible compared with the risks of being attacked by a domestic dog. Foxes will rarely attack dogs or cats, preferring to flee rather than risk injury to their lightweight frames.

What you can do

The best advice is to learn to co-exist with foxes, to delight in their visits to your garden and to watch their playful cubs grow and flourish. However, if you are concerned and would rather deter foxes from your premises, then these simple steps will help you to do that.

And remember, secure fencing is vital to protect any small farmed animals or pets, such as rabbits and chickens. Fox-proof cages need to have mesh-welded wire (not chicken wire), solid floors and secure locks. If you have a persistent and difficult problem, there are other more sophisticated fox deterrents available through humane deterrence companies, which must be fitted by a professional.

SUMMARY

- Reduce available food – make sure bin lids are secure or, if refuse sacks are used, only put them out just before collection. Bungee cords also work well to secure bins.
- Do not over-feed birds
- Replace fish or bone fertilisers with plant-based ones
- Use noise – such as a radio left on in a shed – to disturb their routines and deter a vixen and her cubs
- Use proprietary repellents such as ‘Get off my garden’, which are harmless and work well
- Block fence holes and obstruct well-used pathways and favourite ‘lying-up’ spots
- If all these simple measures fail, visit foxolutions.co.uk or call a humane wildlife deterrence expert (see below)
- Fixing leaky taps is really important as water is a huge enticer to foxes as it is their scarcest resource

If you need further help with foxes, please contact:

Fox project - foxproject.org.uk - 01892 824111

Fox-a-gon – www.fox-a-gon.co.uk - 0208 925 9639



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