

FOX (*VULPES VULPES*)**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Foxes are abundant in urban environments. Most complaints about foxes are received in the period from December through to February when mating takes place – their barking and screaming mating calls can disturb residents. The cubs are born between March to May, and stay with the vixen for 3-4 months.

HOW DID A PROBLEM OCCUR?

Foxes are not known to bite humans unless cornered; then they will bite in self-defence. So, if you find a fox trapped in an outbuilding or similar situation, do not approach it or try to pick it up. Leave it an escape route and it will make its exit as soon as it feels safe.

They have been known to take domestic pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs, as well as cats, on occasions; however this is extremely rare.

Although foxes are a major vector of rabies in Europe, there have been no cases of rabies on British shores. Foxes do carry sarcoptic mange: this is a mite that causes severe irritation and lesions on the fox's skin and generally results in the loss of hair. In some instances this can be passed on to domestic dogs, but close contact tends to be required for this to occur. Sarcoptic mange can cause the foxes immense suffering, and therefore in any cases where this is suspected the RSPCA may be able to help.

FOX BEHAVIOUR

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

DIET

Foxes have varied diets eating anything from earthworms to rodents. They are scavengers and will feed on scraps left accessible to them. Thus, to avoid attracting foxes to your property, food rubbish should be stored correctly before disposal. Storage of food waste in plastic bin bags until it is collected is not recommended, as it will attract more foxes and other pests. Sufficient sturdy external waste bins should be provided to cope with the waste produced. They should have tight-fitting lids or covers, since foxes (and many other pests, such as rodents) are very good climbers and can easily scale bins to reach the contents. Refuse areas should be hosed down after waste is collected.

Find out more about foxes (and other pest species) at Microbee:

Tel.: 020 8540 9968

Email: info@microbee.co.uk

Web: www.microbee.co.uk

CONTROL AND TREATMENT

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 have a responsibility to make sure our clients fully understand our instructions. We ask you to please read the 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

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 remove any trapped animals (or arrange to have them removed) as soon as they are discovered.

Name (Printed):		Date:	
Address:			
Signature:			