

# **Guidelines on Living with Urban Foxes**

It has recently come to my attention that the fox population within the Five Roads is becoming unmanageable. Residents on Denmark Road have told me numerous stories of foxes boldly coming into houses (even through first floor windows), taking leather items, coming through cat flaps, attacking their rabbits and chickens, living under decking, and destroying their gardens. I have been in contact with the RSPCA, and they have given me some specific guidelines to pass along to you to help control the situation.

## **THE PROBLEMS**

### **1. Foxes digging/fouling gardens**

Is your expensive landscaping ruined because of foxes digging up your borders or fouling on your lawn?

### **2. Foxes living under decking/sheds**

Do you have foxes living under your decking, causing unsanitary conditions and preventing you and your children from using your back garden for fear of disease or attack?

### **3. Foxes attacking pets and livestock**

Are your cats and chickens traumatised?

## **GENERAL**

There are a number of societies and organisations in the UK that give guidance on dealing with foxes, but they are not sympathetic to either the removal or destruction of them. They only deal with humane control and living with the urban fox population.

Removal or destruction of foxes is legally an offence of cruelty under the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960, and is condemned by the government's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Foxes are not and never have been classified as "vermin", so local authorities have no legal obligation to act against them. They also know there is little point. Private pest controllers who offer removal service omit to inform you there is no such thing as a vacant fox territory. Remove one fox and another will take over its territory within a matter of days.

If you want to get your own way with foxes, forget about old fashioned "pest control". Deterrence is cheaper, more effective and more humane – it is therefore up to us to control our own fox population. But remember – if your neighbours are using deterrent methods but you are not, YOU are the one that will end up with all the foxes! We must all do this together for it to be effective in encouraging foxes that another territory would be more attractive than our back gardens.

## **SOLUTIONS**

### **1. Remove the attraction**

*DO NOT FEED FOXES, full stop!*

Clean up areas of your garden that are natural habitats and attractions for foxes – piles of rubbish, raw food on the compost pile, large amounts of bird seed and garden manure, etc. Fix holes under your fence and block up possible den sites under sheds and decks to keep foxes from settling in. You must be vigilant in keeping these areas cleared.

### **2. Initial deterrence**

If you suspect that foxes are living under your shed or deck and you don't want them there, these are the steps to take to encourage them to move along:

**Step 1 --** To ensure foxes are currently using the underneath of your shed or deck, make sure to locate all the holes. Foxes invariably have two holes, a front door and a back door if you like.

**Step 2 --** On discovering all the holes and on the basis there are two holes, get two bundles of rags which are saturated with chemical repellent (see below). Loosely block both holes with the rags. If the rags

haven't moved for two or three days, you can safely assume that nothing is going into the hole and nothing is coming out. It is therefore safe to fill in the holes completely with builders rubble and soil.

The Fox Project has extensively tested every repellent on the market, and recommends the most effective products as "Scoot" and "Get Off My Garden". These are safe, proprietary mammal repellents and are widely available. "Get Off My Garden" is a general purpose repellent which may be used at ground level or underground and can be applied directly onto growing plants. "Scoot" is effective as a foliage or lawn spray where fouling or digging is taking place.

Not all methods of deterrence involve chemicals. During experiments carried out in association with Greenwich University, The Fox Project found ultrasonic repellent devices and a water driven gadget, called "Scarecrow", both very effective. I can tell you from personal experience that we had an ultrasonic device on our vegetable patch for several years, and found it extremely effective for preventing fouling from both foxes and cats. These are also widely available in garden centres and hardware stores (but be sure the device's ultrasonic range includes foxes).

With a bit of research, you can find various sorts of products for deterring foxes at garden centres and hardware stores, or online from Fox Solutions -- <http://www.foxolutions.co.uk/> (or 0870 760 2634). If you are unable to manage all this yourself, they also have a personalised fox control service which is carried out in London and the home counties including treatments utilising fox repellents, fox deterrents, fox proofing and fouling clearance measures.

### **3. Continuing prevention**

One of the best products on the market is a cat flap which allows entrance only to pets with either a special electronic tag on their collar or is programmed to the pet's individual microchip – it will not allow any other animals in. These sorts of cat flaps are widely available online and in Brentford from Pets at Home.

If you have an outdoor rabbit hutch or chicken pen, make sure it is absolutely secure from foxes. Also consider using an electronic protection device on it (available from Fox Solutions or other suppliers).

### **REFERENCE**

The Fox Project <http://www.foxproject.org.uk/>, the National Fox Welfare Society <http://www.thefoxwebsite.org/>, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), London Wildlife Trust, and London Borough of Ealing.

I hope this is helpful, but do let me hear from you if you have any specific issues or questions.

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