

Foxes fact sheet

What is fox fouling?

One of the most common problems we receive enquiries about is fox fouling.

However, fox faeces are sometimes confused with either domestic cat or dog faeces as they are quite similar in appearance.

Both are cylindrical in appearance and taper at both ends. The difference is that fox faeces often contain undigested remnants of the animals diet eg fur, feathers and/or bone fragments, are usually deposited in prominent positions to act as a territorial marker to other foxes and have a very pungent smell. Whereas domestic dog or cat faeces are usually smooth in appearance and appear almost segmented.

The Council does not provide a treatment service for foxes

How do you report an injured or diseased fox?

Foxes that are injured and immobile should be reported to the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

Fox problems

Feeding foxes

Foxes, like rats, breed according to the amount of available food in a particular area. Therefore it is advisable not to supplement their diet and feed them, or an area can become over populated. Often the wrong types of food are left out and this can make the animal unwell. Feeding may also cause them to lose their natural fear of humans, and bring them into contact with other humans that may not be appreciative of their presence.

Foxes are opportunists and will attack rabbits, chickens and guinea pigs if given the chance. Therefore owners of such animals should ensure their pet's accommodation is adequately fox proofed if they are housed outside. Strong weld mesh should be used as chicken wire can be chewed through. Strong bolts should be used on doors as a cunning fox can easily open twist and hook catches.

Foxes are naturally very timid and shy animals. They will almost always choose to flee from a situation rather than fight.

However, if a fox is cornered, injured or restrained they will defend themselves, as would any other wild animal.

Damage to gardens

Around February vixens look for a place to have their cubs. They may enlarge a hole under a shed, dig under tree roots or into compost heaps to create an 'earth'. Overgrown gardens are attractive to vixens looking for a place to have their cubs as they provide shelter and plenty of cover.

In August and September there are lots of cubs trying to find food and new territories for themselves. They dig up plant bulbs and create holes in lawns looking for insects to eat.

The cubs prefer well-maintained gardens, as digging for food is easier and there is more space for play.

This damage usually only occurs for a few weeks. Blocking off the underside of sheds and removing piles of debris and compost heaps before the breeding season will encourage them to look elsewhere. Careful use of deterrents can protect a garden and cause the foxes to move on (please follow manufacturers instructions carefully). Be careful never to block a cub into an earth.

Damage / removal of toys and shoes

During August and September, when the cubs are preparing to move on, toys, shoes and other items may be removed or damaged. Items made of rubber or leather is especially attractive to foxes.

This is part of the foxes learning process and normally only lasts a few weeks. They are exploring new objects, playing and finding out what's good to eat. Make sure these objects are shut away before sunset.

Damage to refuse bags

Rubbish from refuse bags is scattered around. Research has shown that the cause of this is more often cats and birds than foxes.

Don't put refuse bags out until the morning of collection unless you keep them in a lidded dustbin.

What can I do?

Fouling is relatively easy to prevent and a squirt of Get off My Garden placed on or next to each dropping will usually break the habit. For fouling on lawns use Scoot as per manufacturer's recommendations. On paths, patios and other hard surfaces use Wash Off and Get Off.

If the 'earth' is very close to human habitation use Get Off My Garden or Scoot in and around the access points. Under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 it is illegal to block a fox inside its earth by filling in the entrance. It is therefore essential that the earth is empty before filling in the holes.

Placing twigs across each entrance hole in such a way that they would be disturbed if the hole was used can easily be checked. Check the sticks daily and when three nights have passed without disturbance you may assume it is safe to fill in the holes.

From February to April checks must be made daily for 10 days as a vixen could stay below ground for that length of time if nursing newborn cubs. After treating a territory with scent repellents a temporary increase in fouling or scent marking is sometimes experienced.

This is because a 'scent marking war' has been started. A fox will take the alien smells to be those of a rival animal and try to defend or regain the territory by aggressive scenting. If this occurs, it is usually only for a short period.

Although repellents sometimes have an immediate effect on foxes it is more usual for them to have a cumulative psychological effect. In order to prevent a fox reclaiming its territory it is advisable to remove any faeces on a daily basis.

Repellent deterrents

Scoot

Scoot is an entirely non-toxic spray and carries only a mild ammonium smell. The product reacts when an animal scent marks by urinating or fouling onto it.

The chemical reaction causes the wrong scent to arise and any territorial animal will suppose another animal is threatening the territory by over scenting its own scent. It can be applied directly onto vegetation and is particularly suitable for lawns as it can be applied inexpensively over a wide area.

Works well against fouling, urinating and scent marking.

Stay Off repellent

Stay Off is similar to Scoot and is used in the same way.

Get Off My Garden repellent

Get Off My Garden are entirely non-toxic jelly granules that carry only a mild citronella smell. It is shorter lived, particularly in bright sunlight or in wet conditions.

Wash Off and Get Off

Wash Off and Get Off is a non-toxic citronella scented spray that neutralises scent marking and urine smells. It is particularly useful against persistent fouling and, unlike most other repellents, may be used on hard surfaces.

Other repellents

Ultrasonic

Ultrasonic devices (electrical devices that give off a high pitched sound inaudible to humans) were found to be largely ineffective against foxes.

Water scarecrow

The Water scarecrow is a gadget that reacts to movement in the garden and shoots water in the direction of that movement. It can be turned on and off as necessary and is also effective against cats.

It frightens the animals away without harming them. This gadget was very effective against foxes when used to protect entire gardens.

Note: There are other products available from garden centres.

More information

[RSPCA](#)

[The Fox Project](#)

[National Fox Welfare Society](#)