

Fox fact sheet

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Red Foxes are skilled predators thanks to their keen vision, sense of smell, speed and climbing ability. By day they shelter in hollows and other secluded spaces, emerging at dusk to hunt and scavenge. They live in family groups comprising a dominant male and female and their cubs.

Foxes breed once a year in late winter. Breeding females will wean about four cubs. Every summer young foxes disperse to find new territories and may move up to 30km away from the den. A typical urban fox family "home range" is around 45 hectares but individuals can make excursions of more than 10km. When foxes make dens beneath buildings (as they will in urban areas), they prefer buildings or areas with low human disturbance, they will more likely be found in vacant properties or those not permanently occupied. Foxes also prefer properties without domestic dogs.

The management of foxes in urban areas is becoming increasingly difficult due to the lack of safe and fox-specific management options. Traditional control strategies such as baiting, and shooting are not possible in urban environment.

Den fumigation is one of the few practical control options available and is generally carried out during spring whilst mother and cubs remain confined to the den. The mother suckles the pups for 4–5 weeks, and they remain hidden in the den while the father brings food to them.

Contact us

Phone 1300 88 22 33 or 9298 4598 Fax 9298 4345

maroondah@maroondah.vic.gov.au | www.maroondah.vic.gov.au | PO Box 156, Ringwood 3134 | DX 38068, Ringwood

Another method of control in the urban environment is habitat manipulation as foxes will use areas that are infested with blackberry and gorse as preferred resting areas. Control of these weed species is an important measure in reducing fox habitat and thus control of the fox population.

Council's Parks Team takes seriously the management of foxes on Council Land and actively seeks out fox dens and treats them to reduce fox numbers. Weed control on Council land is also an important part of Council's Control Strategy. Council may also serve notices to private land owners under its' Local Law to remove blackberry infestation and to treat identified fox dens.

Trapping of foxes is not a preferred method of control in the urban environment due to the risks to non-target species (including domestic animals). There are also stringent controls for the use of traps and authorisation of those using traps.

What if I have foxes on my property?

In Victoria, the control of foxes is the responsibility of each individual landowner.

To discourage foxes from your property ensure that food sources such as rubbish, food scraps, compost and pet food are not accessible to foxes that may be passing through. Foxes are great scavengers and will eat a wide variety of food, so don't encourage them by leaving food out.

If you have located a den, then a pest controller licensed for the control of foxes will be able to assist you. A quick web search or check of telephone directories will provide a range of service providers. Foxes roam over long distances and are good climbers so will often be seen in urban yards. Due to the distance that foxes roam, sighting a fox roaming is not helpful for the identification of dens and thus control.

Dens can be quite hard to detect but are often a hole dug into the side of a mound, dirt will be kicked out backwards as foxes dig in a similar manner to dogs. Signs that there may be cubs in a den will be things like fur or feathers at the entrance which is an indication that the adult is bringing food to the cubs. Occasionally cubs may be seen at the entrance.

If you believe you have found a fox den on Council Land, please contact Council and provide the exact location so that Council is able to find and treat the den. Where dens are identified on private land, Council may serve notice to the landowner to treat. Council can only assist where dens are identified.

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