

# Fox

## What do they look like?

The red fox is a wild member of the dog family. About the size of a lightly built terrier and slightly heavier than a cat, its colour varies from yellow/orange to dark red/brown.

## Where do they live?

Foxes prefer suburban housing with large gardens where they can find shelter under shrubbery, sheds, and in secluded corners. Foxes shelter in burrows known as earths or dens. An active den is likely to be surrounded by food remains, faeces and a musty smell.

## What do they eat?

The fox is an omnivore, eating birds, rabbits, small mammals, insects, worms, fruit, grass and scavenged food. They often bury food to prevent other animals from taking it and to conserve it for use when food is scarce.

## Can foxes harm us?

The fox does not pose a danger to people. Foxes are not naturally aggressive to humans, but, like all wild animals, they may defend themselves if they feel threatened.

Foxes also pose no real danger to cats. Although foxes will scavenge the remains of dead cats, the incidences of them killing cats are extremely rare. However, pets like rabbits and guinea pigs form part of the fox diet so need to be securely housed. Foxes also eat rats and other rodents and can help to keep pest populations in check.

## How do you treat and control foxes?

Knowsley Council does not deal with or control foxes. Responsibility for dealing with foxes lies with the landowner and householders are strongly advised to contact a professional pest control company for advice. Controlling urban foxes can be difficult and expensive and is rarely successful, due to the number of breeding vixens.

There are a number of commercial animal repellents available, but only those approved for use against foxes under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 may be used and the manufacturer's instructions must be followed.

Baited cage traps can be used successfully in urban areas. Captured foxes must be killed humanely by shooting or by a vet. It is against the law to release a trapped fox in unfamiliar surroundings.

The most humane and natural way to control the fox population is to limit their food supply.



## Knowsley Pest Control Service:

**We do not treat foxes but we can provide advice about how to deter them from your garden.**

**There will be a charge if you request a pest control operative to visit your property even if no treatment is made.**

Commercial pest control companies are listed in the Yellow Pages and Thompson's Local Directory.

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## Deterring foxes

If you have foxes, the following advice may be of help.

- Use bird feeders or a high bird table rather than putting food on the ground, and clear up any fallen scraps.
- Cover compost heaps or use bins, as compost is a good source of insects and other food
- Store rubbish securely before putting it out for collection, and use bins with secure lids rather than plastic bags.
- Clear overgrown areas and accumulations of rubbish or rubble as these provide cover for foxes.
- Stop using bonemeal or similar fertilisers as the smell attracts foxes.
- Block access under sheds. This can be done with weld mesh secured to the bottom of the shed and dug into the soil to a depth of one foot.
- Ensure that air bricks leading under your house are in good repair.
- Secure fencing and block any gaps.
- Fence off your vegetable patch, fruit canes or bushes with netting. Chicken wire just under the soil can be used to protect bulbs.
- Keep pets in secure hutches made from weld mesh rather than chicken wire, with secure locks.
- Do not leave toys, shoes, etc. outside at night as cubs like to chew and play with these.

## Council policy

In common with many other authorities, Knowsley Council does not support or practice lethal fox control. It supports coexistence and humane deterrence. Foxes are not vermin; they are part of our urban wildlife. Unlike rats and mice the Council has no statutory duty to deal with foxes. We are happy to provide advice about how to deter them from your garden.

## Further help

**The Fox Project** is the UK's foremost information centre for practical advice on fox deterrence

**The National Fox Welfare Society** can provide assistance on deterrence.

**The Fox Website** provides information from the University of Bristol about fox behaviours and attitudes towards them.



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