

Fox vs Coyote

Studies have shown that fox numbers drop as coyote numbers increase. Coyotes do not tolerate red foxes within their territories and will push the competing carnivores out. People often start seeing red foxes more and they assume that the population is up, when the reality is that coyotes have taken over the rural habitats so that the fox are forced into more urbanized places.

Do Foxes make good pets?

*Foxes, like other wild animals, **do NOT make good pets.** They are wild animals, and have evolved to live their life in the wild. These adaptations that make them able to survive in the wild make them **unmanageable as pets.** They have a very powerful musky odor, will mark their territory, will bite if they feel threatened, and will destroy property in order to attempt to cache food.*



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The Lioncrusher's Domain

PORTSMOUTH ANIMAL CONTROL

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ANIMAL CONTROL

Fox

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Legal Status of the Fox

Foxes in the United States are listed as furbearers or given some status as game animals by most State governments. Fox control measures can be undertaken only under the conditions set by the Game Department. Call Wildlife Services at 603-223-6832 for more information.

Discouraging Foxes

In most instances, food from poorly maintained garbage containers is the attraction around buildings. Keeping tight fitting covers on garbage cans around camps and homes, keeping the garbage area clean and odor free, and taking down bird feeders will usually prevent a fox from becoming a nuisance.

Fox Habits

Red foxes will eat anything, as they are very versatile when it comes to diet. It is this reason that they are such successful predators. They are true omnivores, and will eat rodents, fruit, vegetation, insects, human garbage, young deer, and wild boar. Rodents and rabbits form the bulk of their diet. In the more urban areas of their habitat, they will scavenge on human refuse, and even eat out of pet food bowls left outside. They typically eat 1-2 lb (0.5 - 1 kg) of food a day. They will cache any surplus food near their denning area, to be eaten later. In the autumn, they tend to eat more fruits and

berries, as well as getting into human crops.

Foxes hunt game by stalking and pouncing, just like a cat. They usually hunt in meadows, where their main prey, mice and voles, live. With their incredible sense of hearing, they can locate voles and mice through the thick grass and even in their underground burrows. They wait until the mouse or vole comes above ground, then the fox jumps high in the air and pounces on its prey. To kill its prey, the fox severs the spinal cord with its teeth.

Mating season is between December and April, sooner in lower latitudes, later in higher latitudes. Female foxes only give birth to one litter a year. The percentage of female foxes (vixens) giving birth in a given year depends directly on the number of voles in their home range. They have more kits on years where the vole population is higher. Unusually, in areas where hunting is intense, the population does not suffer, since most of the population is made up of males and non-breeding females. In a way, hunting just reduces competition amongst the foxes.

The females give birth to the kits in a den, either dug by themselves or using an abandoned burrow. Sometimes, a den is used for several generations. Usually, 3-4 kits, weighing 50-150 g at birth, comprise a litter.

If more than one vixen gives birth in a den, they will help to raise each others young. The male helps by providing food. The

family breaks up in autumn. Usually, males leave first, at about 6 months old. They may travel a great distance, up to 18 mi (30 km) to establish a territory of their own. Females tend to stay in their natal territories, and establish territories of their own within their mother's. Foxes are fully mature at 10 months old, and breed the following spring.

Foxes are primarily nocturnal and crepuscular in their habits, being most active during the early hours of darkness and very early morning hours. However, a vixen with young kits forages more frequently and is active during the daytime. They are less active on wet or cold nights. They will move up to 8 km in one night in search of food. Foxes can reach speeds of up to 48 km/hr (30 mph). They can jump a distance 2 meters and they are good swimmers

Health Concerns

Rabies outbreaks are most prevalent among red foxes in southeastern Canada and in the eastern United States. **The incidence of rabies in foxes has declined substantially since the mid-1960's for unexplained reasons.**

Foxes also get numerous other diseases and parasites. They can carry canine distemper, rabies, and upper respiratory diseases as well as mange, ticks, lice, fleas, tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms, and various protozoans.