



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

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Dear

Pest - Foxes - Advice only

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www.havering.gov.uk

I refer to your recent enquiry regarding foxes at the above address. The Council do not provide a service for foxes, however, please find enclosed a leaflet which you should find very informative.

Please quote the above reference with all future contact with this Service on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Anand Punj

Enc

Cleaner, Safer, Prouder Together



FOXES

Facts About Foxes

- In urban areas the life expectancy of a fox is 14 months.
- 70- 80% of fox cubs die before they reach maturity and so never breed.
- Foxes are mainly nocturnal and hunt during the night but they sometimes venture out during the day.
- In urban areas, foxes eat a diet of scavenged food scraps, berries, plant bulbs, worms, garden insects, birds such as feral pigeons and the occasional small mammal including rats and mice.
- Foxes will take pet rabbits and guinea pigs if they *are* given the opportunity. Using strong weld mesh or chain-link wire on hutches and runs will make pets more secure, chicken wire is not sufficient. Bolts are more secure than hook or twist catches and cannot easily be opened by a fox. Garden pets should be made secure before sunset.
- Foxes generally avoid contact with dogs and cats.
- Foxes can carry the same diseases as domestic dogs.

Fox Complaints

Noise

- Foxes may be heard screaming' during the mating season in December and January.
- In late August and September fox cubs leave their dens and prepare to find new territories of their own. Vixens (female foxes) may be heard calling loudly as they lose control of their cubs. The cubs may be heard squabbling over food and rights to new territories.
- These sounds are only heard for a few weeks, If you are kept awake by foxes try turning on a light, making a sudden noise or opening the door. Usually these sounds and movements will scare a fox away.

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 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.

Fox Research

- More complaints are received about fox nuisance during the months of August and early September because of the temporary increase in numbers and due to cub activity.
- Culling of foxes makes no difference to fox numbers overall. Killing the resident fox will encourage other foxes to move in from surrounding areas and, as more food is available to those left, more cubs are produced.
- Deterrents do work. The problem doesn't simply move down the road. The foxes usually move to a site where they are tolerated or appreciated. ***See information on deterrents at the end.**

Foxes and The Law

- Killing and controlling foxes is restricted under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 makes it an offence to intentionally inflict unnecessary suffering on any wild mammal
- There is no poisonous substance authorised for use on foxes.
- It is an offence to set snares for foxes in a situation where a dog, cat or protected animal may be killed or injured.
- It is an offence to use a firearm close to a highway or near inhabited properties.
- it is considered cruel to cage trapped foxes and to release them elsewhere. This is because the new territory would be unfamiliar to the fox causing them difficulty in finding shelter and food. They may also be encroaching on another foxes territory and thus lead to fights.
- The use of Gin Traps is banned under the Pests Act 1954

Humane Fox Deterrents

Scent Repellents

IMPORTANT: Renardine is no longer available and should not be used.

Scoot **Scoot** is an entirely non-toxic spray and carries only a mild ammoniupii smell. Its effects are similar to those of Renardine but they are achieved differently. 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 overscenting 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 scentmarking.

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

Get Off My Garden **Get Off My Garden** are entirely non-toxic jelly granules that carry only a mild citronella smell. Its effects are similar to those of **Renardine**, but it is shorter lived, particularly in bright sunlight or in wet conditions. A good alternative to **Renardine** as it may be used close to human accommodation.

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.

Treatment Procedures

Shallow foraging scrapes

Shallow scrapes dug into lawns and flowerbeds as foxes forage for food, such as worms, grubs and beetles, are particularly common in late summer.

To avoid staining grass **Get Off My Garden** granules can be used by squirting liberally into each scrape. The scrapes can then be filled in.

Do not fill in holes if you cannot see the bottom.

Plant Damage

Plant damage is usually caused by foxes trying to reach grubs around plant roots or by playful cubs chewing and tugging out plants. Recently dug soil is especially attractive as it is easier to dig and the use of bone meal or other animal based fertilizer's causes foxes to think that carrion is buried underneath.

Some problems can be resolved simply by changing the fertilizer used, alternatively use Get Off My Garden around the plants.

Fouling

Foxes use their droppings as a signal to other foxes. For this reason they do not bury them and often place them in prominent positions such as on high ground, footpaths and on objects left in the garden.

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 Got Off**.

Fox Earths

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 check this. 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.

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.

Availability

Recommended repellents are widely available from garden centres or hardware stores (though not, usually, the warehouse types). Should products prove difficult to obtain, please contact the manufacturer:

Product	Manufacturer	Contact number
Scoot	Sinclair Horticulture and Leisure	01522 537561
Stay Off	Vitax Ltd	01530 510060
Get Off My Garden	Pet and Garden Supplies Ltd	01659 50141
Wash off and Get Off	Pet and Garden Supplies Ltd	0165950141
Scarecrow	PetSafe Ltd	01993 823833

Manufacturers should be able to put you in touch with local retailers.

Further fox information

The Fox Project: Deterrence Advice Line
Phone: 0906 272 4411 (premium rate)

National Fox Welfare Society
Phone: 01933 411996

Humane Urban Wildlife Deterrence
Phone: 020 8316 7852