

The Red Fox

Each year Animal Services receives many wildlife inquiries including calls regarding red foxes.

Animal Services does not remove healthy wildlife but we can offer advice on how to coexist. Foxes are part of a healthy ecosystem; they keep our environment balanced by controlling rodent populations.



General Information

Foxes have reddish coloured fur with black tipped ears, legs, and a white tipped tail. The chest and belly is a creamy colour. The fur of young kits is short, thick, and they can be lighter or darker in colour than the adults. Adult foxes can reach a length of 3.6 feet (1.1 metres) with their tail measuring 13.8 to 16.5 inches (35-42 cm). The average weight of a fox is between 8 to 15 pounds (3.6 to 6.8 kg). Foxes can live up to 12 years, however, in the wild their average life span is about 3-4 years.

- Foxes breed once a year and the young kits/pups are born in the spring, both parents care for the young.
- Foxes are curious and intelligent, however they are generally shy animals and prefer to avoid confrontations with people.
- They are usually solitary outside of breeding season and prefer to hunt alone.
- Foxes do not hibernate and are quite active during the winter.
- Coyotes are one of their main predators as are hawks, owls, dogs, and humans. In habitats where coyotes are present, foxes prefer to live in close proximity with humans as a means of protection.
- Foxes are omnivores but their diet consists of mainly rodents such as mice.

Sightings in the Day

It is very common to see foxes during the day but they are most active at dawn or dusk.

Abnormal Behaviour

Signs of illness such as rabies may include staggering, falling down, inability to walk, unprovoked aggression, biting at their own limbs, attacking inanimate objects or extreme hair loss due to mange.

Habitat

Foxes prefer open, grassy regions with bushy fence lines and woody stream borders. They usually take over the dens of smaller animals but in urban environment, they can make their homes in backyards under decks, sheds or woodpiles.

How Can I Discourage Wildlife?

Remove All Food Attractants

Be diligent, particularly during the summer months when wildlife families are being raised and in the fall when young are being dispersed and looking for new homes. Keep garage and shed doors closed and remove food attractants on your property such as birdseed, pet food, fallen fruit, garbage and compost.

Lawn and Garden

- Wildlife is attracted to fruit/vegetable gardens. Install a burrow proof perimeter fence, if permitted.
- Try spraying veggies with bottled water mixed with hot sauce, repeat after rain.
- Skunks dig for grubs by making small holes in the lawn during spring and fall months, typically April and September. Skunks can rid your lawn of grubs without the use of chemicals but the digging can cause dismay. Since grubs are very hard to eradicate - speak to a lawn care professional for advice.
- Do not re-sod or re-seed until you are sure the animals are no longer returning.

Wildlife Deterrents

- Install motion sensor sprinklers (they can be set for distance and width of most yards).
- Place wildlife garden mats (plastic grids with small raised tips to discourage walking in the area).
- Place a radio on low-volume talk station in the area with sweaty human clothing or hair clippings from a human to mimic a person nearby.
- Sprinkle blood or bone meal fertilizer on the lawn.

Prevent Wildlife from Burrowing Under your Shed or Deck

Install 16 gauge galvanized 1"x1" steel mesh around the base of your shed or deck to prevent a burrowing animal from digging beneath the structure and moving in, here's how:

1. Dig a trench around the entire structure, a minimum of 12 inches deep and 18 inches wide.
2. Install the 16-gauge mesh in an L shape away from the base of the structure, going straight down 12 inches and then bend outwards 18 inches at a 90-degree angle.
3. Back fill the trench, covering the screen with soil (do not place rocks or blocks over screened area as skunks like to dig under things and may clear the screen by digging under the rocks/blocks).
4. Once the mesh is installed you can cover with soil and plant a garden, re-sod or seed.
5. **Never enclose an area if you suspect an animal is living under the structure.**

How Can I Deal with a Fox on my Property?

Evict a fox

1. Make the fox feel uncomfortable on your property if it is safe for you to do so.
2. Remove food attractants such as garbage, compost, vegetable gardens, bird feeders, and fruit trees/bushes.
3. Place a radio near the area where foxes are loitering on your property. Tune it to a talk radio station so that human voices can be heard clearly.
4. Install wind chimes around the perimeter of your property, providing they do not disturb your neighbours.
5. Place items with strong human scents around your backyard. Foxes will try to avoid areas where they think they may have a confrontation with a human.
6. Continue until the foxes stop coming to your property.
7. You can use these methods proactively to help prevent wildlife from making your property their home.

Safety Tips

- Keep away from the den site area.
- Carry a flashlight, umbrella, or personal alarm to scare foxes away if they cross your path.
- Enclose areas underneath patio decks, sheds, and other potential den sites to keep them away from your yard.
- Keep your cat indoors and your dog on a leash.
- ALWAYS supervise and be in close proximity to your pets when outdoors.
- **NEVER** feed wildlife.

Live Trapping

It is illegal to relocate trapped animals beyond one kilometre in Ontario and most of us are ill prepared to transport wildlife in our personal vehicles. Trapping and removal can also be inhumane as orphaned young will die and it is not a permanent solution as animals simply re-populate and fill the space. For a fee, Animal Services will release live trapped animals on site. It is also illegal to poison any animal.

Report Wildlife Feeding

Please report illegal wildlife feeding, food attractions or property standards issues that may be contributing to nuisance wildlife issues by contacting Animal Services at 905-896-5858. Keep your community safe and wildlife wild. For more information please visit our web site at www.mypetmississauga.ca