

FOX INFORMATION SHEET

In common with numerous other Councils, Kirklees has a policy on foxes based upon humane deterrence.

The fox is not, and never has been, classified as vermin, and the Council is under no legal obligation to exercise any form of control. Whilst some people may consider them to be a pest, the fox is native wildlife and has been afforded some degree of protection from cruelty under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996. Poisoning and gassing foxes is in fact illegal and upon conviction, fines of up to £5,000 can be levied.

Concern is also expressed about danger to pets, particularly cats. Cats and foxes exist in large numbers in urban areas and are likely to meet each other on a regular basis, particularly at night, without incident. Foxes may kill other animals such as pet rabbits, guinea pigs and birds because they form a natural part of their diet, but secure housing for pets can prevent this.

The fox has long been a resident of the urban environment. The issue of their desirability is largely one of personal opinion and experience. Many people derive pleasure from foxes and other urban wildlife, especially as they provide a valuable educational opportunity for children to see nature at close hand. For those who consider the fox a nuisance, humane deterrents can be used.

Some people express concern that the fox poses a health hazard to people. Foxes are not aggressive to people, and will generally try to avoid contact. They may appear bold, but this is merely inquisitiveness and familiarity with people in urban environments, not aggression.

There is no evidence to show that urban foxes are any less healthy than their rural cousins. The most common affliction of foxes is canine mange. The mite can be transferred to dogs by contact with an infected animal, but actual cases of this are likely to be low due to lack of close contact. Toxicariasis is an infection caused by the parasite roundworm commonly found in the intestines of canines and cats. There has never been a proven case of an infection of Toxicariasis being passed to a human by a fox. The only serious health hazard posed by foxes is the threat of rabies. Fortunately, Britain remains rabies free, and therefore the mere potential to carry rabies poses no actual threat, either to man or animals.

As far as the population of foxes is concerned, only about 30% of the fox population breeds each year, the rest being subordinates waiting for their chance to breed when the dominant animals die. Only about 25% of cubs live to breeding age, and the average life expectancy of the urban fox is under two years.

It has been calculated that 70% of the total fox population would need to be killed every year to cause any reduction in the breeding population of an area. Contrary to belief, the urban fox population is not increasing. Fox populations remain relatively stable and self-regulatory according to the availability of food and habitat.

In common with other animals such as cats, dogs, rats and birds, foxes will scavenge from our domestic waste. The primary responsibility for storing waste correctly, prior to collection, lies with residents, and we should endeavour to secure our waste storage so that animals cannot get to it.

Foxes are territorial and warn off other foxes by 'scenting' their patch with urine and faeces. The use of chemical (smell) deterrents has been found effective in deterring foxes from gardens and other areas. Repellents can be obtained from good garden centres, DIY or hardware stores. As with any chemical, the instructions for safe use should be followed.

If you need any further information, or if you are experiencing a problem with foxes and would like more detailed advice, you can call the Urban Fox Deterrence Advice Line on 01892 514863.

Information can also be obtained from -

The National Fox Welfare Society, telephone 01933 411996

The RSPCA, telephone 0870 555 5999

www.foxproject.org.uk

www.nfws.org.uk

www.rspca.org.uk