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IMPORTANT NOTICE: A.S.K. has provided our species specific tips based off of years of field experience and reported research; we are NOT in the business of wildlife damage control and as such, are not profiting from the recommendations provided. These tips may not be all-inclusive and we recommend discussing your specific issue with A.S.K.'s wildlife biologist **(877-596-7776)**, or your local *humane* wildlife damage control specialist for further details. Using a variety of the tactics provided usually equates to the highest success rate. All actions must adhere to Michigan law.

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) Nuisance Tips

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Gray Fox



Red Fox

Understanding Fox Biology

Dietary generalists; they will eat both plant and animal matter. If animal matter is lacking in the environment, and berries/fruits are available, they can shift easily to a vegetarian diet.

Primarily nocturnal in urban areas reportedly to purposely avoid contact/interaction with humans. However, foxes will be active during the day as long as they feel secure, and especially if they are preying on species active during the day, like squirrels.

Good for rodent control.

Kits are generally born in March and April.

Litters on average: 4-5 kits, but as many as 8 have been recorded.

If mother dies, other family members will generally feed/care for the young.

Kits are weaned by approximately at 9 weeks of age and will begin hunting with parents shortly after.

Kits may stay with the family, or disperse in late summer or early fall to establish their own territories.

Fox may dig their own dens, OR use abandoned dens of woodchucks or other burrowing animals.

Dens are primarily used for raising kits and as escape/protection from inclement winter weather.

Nuisance Remedies

****Foxes are not normally dangerous to humans, unless rabid or if captured/handled. ** Only a total of 18 fox have been deemed rabid from 1978-2009 in all of Michigan**.**

Tolerance

- *Perceived* threats to children or pets are unwarranted, and can be easily corrected by not permitting small animals or children unattended during times when fox are present or are known to be raising kits.

Michigan DNR Damage and Nuisance Wildlife Permits states: “A wild animal that poses no real threat to the safety of the public, livestock, crops, or property should not be viewed as a nuisance simply because it exists. A public that is knowledgeable about the habits and life history of wild animals is better equipped to recognize and solve wildlife damage and nuisance situations.”

- If the landowner can wait ~9 weeks for the kits to be weaned, and THEN initiate hazing methods listed below, it will ensure that the kits are not orphaned from their families. Orphaned kits would be requiring of capture, and transported to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. It is considered inhumane to intentionally trap/kill a parent while kits are dependent on them.
- If the landowner cannot wait ~9 weeks, steps can be taken to keep fox away from human residences, and sometimes fox will move their kits to a den farther away.

Harassment

If tolerance can be accomplished until kits are old enough to move on, it is best, even if the den is in an inconvenient location. Kits will play outside of their den right before they are able to leave with parents. If/when you see this activity; rest assured that the entire family will soon be moving on. This is a good time to initiate the hazing methods provided below. Mild harassment *prior* may encourage them to move also, but the *risks increase* for kits to be orphaned because the fox will have to pick each kit up and physically move it to a new den location.

Make the den entrance or problem areas (border of your yard) inhospitable/uncomfortable:

- Placing objects, leaves, mulch, or soil in den entrances may help to disturb fox.
- Used urine-soaked cat litter at the entrance/around perimeter of yard.
- Items with strong human scent: old shoes, sweaty socks near entrance.

>>>More tips below!!

Exclusion

While steps to erect a fence may not be able to be taken immediately, placing a fenced boundary near the problem areas can mitigate *future* interactions while giving humans an increased sense of safety.

- Outside animals should always be kept in protective enclosures, especially at night; free-ranging animals can easily be preyed on, and it is only natural instincts for a fox to attack if poultry or small domestic pets wander into their territory. Fencing should include L-shaped footers, buried around the perimeter to prevent any mammal predator from digging underneath.
- A single strand electrified fence placed 4 inches off the ground can provide extra security.
- Fencing at least 6 feet high with the bottom extending into the ground at least 6 inches, or 1 foot outward. Outward invert the top of the fence, or use electric fence along the top to increase security. Existing fences can be fitted with “Coyote Roller™” (www.coyoteroller.com) systems which make it more difficult for predators to enter.
- Keep brush piles and dense weeds away from your home otherwise animals will find cover or food sources in them.
- Crawl spaces under porches, decks, sheds etc. should be closed off using fencing. Otherwise these areas make good den sites for raising young.

Repellents

Any repellent on the market targeting dogs, will also work for fox or coyotes. “Scoot” and “Get off My Garden” are two commercially available products that have been used with success for repelling fox/coyotes.

****Green tip:** Have cats? Urine-soaked cat litter is a great deterrent for many mammal nuisances. Place near the opening of the den, or create a boundary adjacent to attract fox AWAY from your yard. Don't have a cat? Find a neighbor who does, or ask the local animal shelter/humane society to bag their used urine litter. Wear gloves and mask when distributing litter.

Ways to Haze

- Put ~40 pennies in a pop can and wrap with aluminum foil. Secure with duct tape. Shake it when you see a coyote to quickly scare the animal.
- Have an umbrella handy when working outside. Pop it open and scare the animal when you see it. Wildlife don't like surprises.
- Carry a whistle and blow it! Horns or other noise makers also work well.
- Be BIG and VOCAL. Bang pots/pans, throw objects *towards* (NOT at) fox.

Scare Devices/Hazing Methods

Noise-making devices placed near the problem sites can reduce the comfort level of fox and encourage them to move.

- Battery-operated radios left on at night especially, or motion-sensitive alarms.
- Motion-activated sprinkler can be an effective deterrent in small areas.
- When you see a fox/coyote, make them uncomfortable. Using loud voices and banging on pots/pans can frighten them. Fox are very sensitive to noise and human activity.
- Mylar balloons 2-3 feet off the ground just outside the entrance of the den.

With ALL hazing methods, the objective is to make the site uncomfortable for the fox and encourage them to move their kits to a more secure/safe location. Once you are 100% positive that ALL young are gone from the den, you can firmly fill in the den with soil, and seal in used cat litter to increase the chances that it will **not** be re-opened for use.

Habitat Management: Is Your Yard an Attractant?

- If you compost fruits/meat scraps, you are attracting many species of wildlife to your yard. Use sealed composts that animals cannot access.
- Trash cans should always be sealed and stored inside garage/buildings, only put out on the morning of collection.
- Don't leave pet food outside. If you feed stray cats, you will attract wildlife. Try making pet food only available during the daylight hours, and only for a calculated amount of time to reduce the chances of baiting in fox/coyote/raccoon/opossum etc. Or stop feeding the strays to reduce the nuisance issue.
- Do not intentionally offer fox/coyote scraps/food! If doing so, you are changing their natural instincts and making them more prone to coming near humans.

Conclusion

Understanding the biology and behavior of fox should, in most cases, help reduce the occurrence of nuisance situations and human-wildlife conflicts. While fox may be *perceived* as a threat, they are not generally aggressive towards humans. Be mindful! Don't leave small pets or children unattended while fox are known to be around. Use the tips provided and you will find a *long-lasting solution* to conflicts. Trapping and removal, or killing, are band-aid methods and are **NOT** proven to be efficient or effective at eliminating nuisance concerns. When fox/coyote are removed, others will simply fill the same site.

Resources

Project Coyote http://www.projectcoyote.org/ProjectCoyote_FactSheet_CoyoteNews.pdf

The Fox Project <http://www.zip-pix.com/foxp/infosheet/deterrence%202009w.pdf>

Audubon Feature Story on Urban Coyotes <http://audubonmagazine.org/features1105/habitat.html>

All Species Kinship Wildlife Resources: <http://www.allspecieskinship.org/wildliferesources.html>

Solving Problems http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/foxes/tips/solving_problems_with_foxes.html

Michigan Coyote/Fox Rehabilitator: Oakland County, Holly Hadac: 248-672-9615

Portions adapted from: Wild Neighbors: The Humane Approach to Living With Wildlife By: John Hadidian
Coyotes in Our Midst: Coexisting With an Adaptable and Resilient Carnivore By: Animal Protection Institute