

Swindon Borough Council

Pest Control Service

Fact Sheet



FOXES



Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Foxes are now a common sight in suburbs and towns as well as the countryside. They pose no direct threat to people but can take domestic pets such as rabbits, guinea pigs and poultry for food. Cat owners may be concerned for the safety of their pets but there is little evidence that cats may be attacked by foxes, usually the two species ignore each other.

One area of potential concern is that should rabies ever invade this country, it is probable that foxes would become the main carriers of the disease, as they are in Eastern and Central Europe. If that were to happen, extensive fox control measures would be needed.

Apart from sightings of the animals, signs of foxes include the typical musty smell, food scraps, damage to rubbish bags, the taking of pet rabbits, guinea pigs etc. and traces of hair on thorns and barbed wire. You may also hear them “barking” at night.

Behaviour

In towns, foxes are mainly active at night. During daytime they usually lie up in the kind of cover provided by railway embankments, parks, cemeteries, derelict land and overgrown gardens. They live in “earths” which they dig themselves or can take over and enlarge rabbit holes or badger sets. They can also use dens under sheds and outbuildings.

What do they eat?

Urban foxes eat a variety of food including wild birds, rabbits, mice, voles, insects and earthworms as well as fruit from wild and garden plants. They are also scavengers, taking food from bird tables and the carcasses of animals killed by cars. They also take food from rubbish sacks and dustbins as do dogs, cats and squirrels.

To avoid foxes attacking your bins please use your wheelie bin and keep the lid closed. Swindon Borough Council Do Not Control Foxes.

For lots more information about urban foxes, visit the website of The Fox Project (a charity dedicated to the red fox) at <http://www.foxproject.org.uk/>