

Foxes

REDUCING THEIR IMPACT IN THE NORTHERN AND YORKE NRM REGION



Why are foxes a problem?

The spread foxes closely followed the distribution of rabbits across mainland Australia. Today, foxes are found in most areas south of the tropics, including the N&Y NRM region.

Foxes breed once a year in late winter/ early spring. Breeding females wean about four cubs. Between summer and autumn young foxes disperse to find new territories and may move up to 30km away from their dens.

Foxes have excellent sight, smell, and hearing for skilled hunting. Foxes also possess canine teeth, speed, agility (including limited climbing ability) and wide dietary adaptability. They cause environmental damage by preying on many species of native wildlife. Economic damage results from fox predation on livestock, including lambs, calves, poultry, water fowl and goats.

What is their impact?

The fox is one of the most successful predators in the world. About a third of their diet is from wildlife, a third from pest animals like rabbits and mice, and a third from livestock. In uncontrolled areas, foxes have been shown to cause lamb losses of 10-30%. Under extreme conditions predation on lambs can be as high as 50%. Foxes include birds, small mammals and reptiles in their menu.

Effective fox control has been shown to reduce this pressure on native wildlife and allow populations to recover. Predation on other pest animals does not provide

effective control for these pests, because unlike native animals, rabbits and mice can breed faster than the foxes can eat them.

What can you do? - Some methods of control

Seek assistance from Natural Resources Northern and Yorke for information and prices of fox baits and to help you plan your fox control program. Only Natural Resources Northern and Yorke can supply 1080 fox baits. 1080 is a naturally occurring substance that is highly toxic to foxes. **WARNING: 1080 is toxic to dogs** There is no antidote available for 1080. Directions for use must be followed carefully.

Baiting

Baiting is an effective and environmentally conscious form of fox control in most rural areas. You will get the best results from a baiting program by baiting twice a year and covering a larger area by getting neighbours to bait at the same time. Baits should be replaced until the take is reduced. It is important to keep records of the number of baits taken.

Biennial baiting takes advantage of the fox life-cycle to keep numbers low all year, and reduce livestock damage at key times. Autumn is an ideal time for fox baiting. This is a



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time of year when fox numbers tend to peak and younger foxes are dispersing across the region. It is also a time when food sources are low. This combination of increased mobility and less food increases the chance of foxes eating bait. The second ideal time for baiting is early spring in when vixens are breeding and need more food. Baiting at this time not only removes adult foxes but can also remove the next generation, preventing population increase.

Other fox control options

Integrated fox control measures are difficult because foxes migrate and are more likely to re-infest previously controlled areas from distant uncontrolled areas

DEN DESTRUCTION

Den destruction is not as profitable as it is for rabbits, because the foxes will quickly make new dens, so it has little impact on fox numbers.

FENCING

Fox-proof fencing is effective for small areas only. It is an expensive option and requires regular maintenance.

SHOOTING

Shooting foxes is helpful, but likely to only remove a small number of foxes. Only those foxes that are easily seen are shot and spotlighting usually underestimates the fox population

BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL CONTROL

Biological and chemical fertility control measures are being considered, but it may be many years before this will be a viable control method.



For more information

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