

THE URBAN FOX PROBLEM



The impacts of foxes in urban areas are complex. On the one hand, they kill native animals and spread weeds; on the other, they help control other feral animals

Foxes are widely distributed and a common pest in urban areas.

Foxes were introduced to Australia in the early 1870s for recreational hunting. They soon spread across much of mainland Australia south of the tropics and can now be found in diverse environments including urban areas. Widespread in the Blue Mountains, urban foxes pose a threat to both wildlife and domestic pets. Whilst fox control is a complex issue, there are things you can do to reduce the impacts of foxes in your own backyard.

What are the impacts of foxes in urban areas of the Blue Mountains?

- Foxes are omnivores and scavengers that feed on a wide range of food sources commonly found in urban areas such as food scraps, uneaten pet food, insects, berries, fallen fruit, road-kill, chickens & native wildlife.
- Despite limited research on the impacts of urban foxes in the Blue Mountains, they most likely affect particular wildlife populations including small to medium-sized mammals and ground-nesting birds.
- Besides preying on wildlife, foxes are known to attack domestic pets (such as chickens and guinea pigs), spread weeds (such as Blackberry) and carry disease (such as mange).
- Foxes also prey upon feral cats, rabbits and rats. Foxes therefore help to control the populations of these pests.



Urban foxes are nocturnal creatures that enjoy easy access to food. An effective way to minimise the impacts of foxes in your backyard is to remove their food source.

What can you do to deter foxes?

- Start in your own backyard. **PEST-PROOF YOUR PROPERTY:**
- Never feed foxes.
- Avoid feeding native wildlife - they become less self-reliant and more susceptible to predation by foxes.
- Feed your pests inside or clean and remove outside pet bowls immediately after use.
- Cover your compost. Compost fallen fruit from fruiting trees.
- Fox-proof chicken pens and other pet enclosures.
- Remove noxious and environmental weeds like Blackberry, Honeysuckle and Asparagus Fern. Foxes otherwise eat the berries and potentially spread the seeds far and wide.
- Educate your family, friends and neighbours about how they can help reduce fox populations.



Pest-proof your backyard to protect your property and farmyard pets.

NATIONAL ISSUE

seeking local solutions

THE URBAN FOX PROBLEM

Fox control is not a simple matter

- Fox control is a complex issue. To succeed, it must be strategic, sustainable & continuous, with an ongoing commitment of financial & other resources.
- Effective fox management is expensive. The cost to resource successful and ongoing fox management programs is significant.
- Because foxes are widespread, the cost of broad-scale management is prohibitive. Whilst targeted fox management is more affordable, it is typically only implemented when specific wildlife conservation outcomes (i.e. protection of a particular threatened species) can be achieved.
- Effective fox management needs to be ongoing. When foxes are removed from an area, other foxes (in the absence of continuous control) quickly repopulate the area.
- Fox control programs need to be integrated with concurrent rabbit and feral cat control programs as these pest populations may explode with the removal of foxes.
- Urban fox management is not readily funded by government. State and Federal government funding for fox control prioritises high-conservation outcomes (ie. the protection of a specific endangered species). Because urban wildlife in the Blue Mountains does not meet these priorities, external government grants to fund urban fox management are unlikely.



You can trap foxes on your own land, but need to ensure the animal is humanely euthenased. Discuss the options with your local vet.



You need a permit to use 1080 fox baits. But fox baits are prohibited in urban areas.

What are the options for fox control?

- Baiting is an effective form of fox control but its use within 500m of domestic residences is prohibited without special permits. This is because of the risk to people and their pets.
- The use of trapping in urban fox control is resource-intensive and not particularly efficient; it is difficult to trap in sufficiently large numbers to be effective.
- Householders can help limit the damage caused by foxes by pest-proofing their property and reducing the food sources that attract foxes in the first place.



The main fox control programs in the Blue Mountains region target the conservation of the Brush tailed Rock Wallaby (above)

What fox control programs are currently used?

- Targeted fox baiting programs are conducted to protect the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby. These are conducted by National Parks and Wildlife Services at Jenolan Caves, Wolgan Valley and Capertee Valley.
- Broad-scale fox control is not undertaken in the Blue Mountains region.

