



Foxes in Delaware



Delaware has two native species of foxes, red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*). Both species of foxes are found in all three counties of Delaware, yet red foxes are the most common. Below are some fox facts about both of our native species.

Red Fox:

- Thrive in a wide variety of habitats but prefer wooded areas adjacent to agricultural fields and farmland.
- Mostly active at night and at dusk and dawn.
- Breeding season in Delaware is March and April, during breeding season foxes can be seen during the daytime searching for mates.
- Typical litter size is between 3 to 6 “kits”.
- Red foxes can be seen on Delaware’s beaches searching for some of their favorite food items.

Gray Fox:

- Prefer wooded areas and swamps away from human activity
- Mostly active at night and at dusk and dawn.
- Gray Foxes are Delaware’s State mammal
- Much more elusive than red fox and are rarely found in or near urban areas.
- Gray foxes can climb trees to escape predators, forage for fruit, or chase prey.

Nuisance Foxes

Foxes that either hunt poultry or livestock, dig under structures or den in areas where they are not welcome unfortunately become nuisance foxes. Foxes that cause conflict can be addressed several different ways.

Prevention

Foxes that become acclimated to urban and suburban environments typically are in these areas for two main reasons, food and safety. Removal of trash, outdoor cat food, and food scraps should be done to prevent foxes from feeding on trash or seeking prey in and around homes. Compost bins that contain food scraps should be secured as foxes are omnivorous

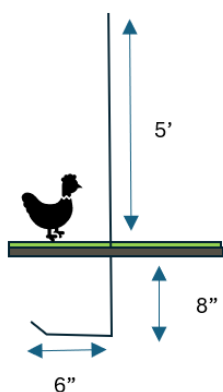
and will eat remnant fruits and vegetables. Foxes that are seen in urban and suburban environments should be hazed or harassed to create a hostile environment.

Exclusion

Foxes are known to tunnel to either get to prey items, or to create den sites in order to create shelter or have their young. Exclusion should be done to protect areas where foxes and their kits are not welcome. Exclusion should be done in a way that prevents a fox from direct access on the surface as well as prevents digging underneath the surface.

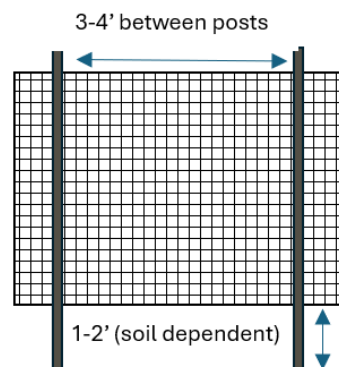
Stationary Chicken Coops

Stationary coops and runs can be protected from foxes by using the correct size wire mesh and proper installation. Mesh should be selected that has enough strength to prevent forced entry by predators, ideally 1" mesh is selected. Fencing should envelope the open area where poultry will have access to during the day.



To prevent tunneling into the coop, the fence material should be buried at least 12" deep, or 8" deep with a 90-degree bend in the material to the inside of the coop (see image below). Fencing should be secured to posts to prevent wind and predators from knocking fencing over. Additionally, rock or gravel may be added to the base of fencing (below ground level) as an additional deterrent for predators.

Coops should be monitored frequently for any damage to fencing and should be repaired if possible. For home poultry flocks that have free roaming birds, a timer door should be considered. Doors with automatic timers allow for poultry to be secured from a set time frame, ideally from before dusk to after dawn, securing them in the hours of the most fox activity.



Dens

Foxes create dens as a location to rear young or to hid from the elements and larger predators. Dens can be made under any structure or debris pile in yards. To prevent dens from being used or made. Remove piles of yard waste or wood that might invite foxes from denning underneath of them. Different scent products exist to deter foxes from entering them (ex. pelletized coyote urine). Ultrasonic devices that disturb foxes and force them to avoid an area (FoxWatch) can be used as an audio deterrent. Strobe Lights or high intensity LED lights can be used to harass foxes attempting to den around the home.

Filling in dens could lead to inadvertently killing fox adults and kits in dens. During the fox breeding season (late February-April) dens should not be filled and monitored at a distance

to see if they are active. If a den is active and has kits, (if possible) allow for the kits to reach two months of age. When kits reach 2 months old, they will begin to hunt with adult foxes. Outside of breeding season, dens should be backfilled in with stone and soil once it's known they are empty, hardware cloth can be added below the upper layer of soil. If the den is potentially causing a structural concern, consult should be sought from a licensed contractor.

Hazing

Hazing can be done with several methods. Hazing can consist of loud noises (ex. banging pots and pans, yelling), spraying water, or creating an intimidating appearance when confronting them. Effectively done hazing should create a hostile environment that discourages a fox from being in the area while also not causing physical harm to the fox. Hazing must be done with consistency. If a fox or any wildlife species is becoming a nuisance animal, it must be hazed continuously over time to create a learned behavior that it's not welcomed in a specific area.

Scent Deterrents

Some scent products can be used as deterrents for foxes. Granulated or pelletized coyote urine is available and can be sprinkled in areas where foxes are not wanted. Mixtures of garlic and citronella are somewhat effective natural repellents due to their strong odor. All pelletized, granulated, powdered and liquid deterrents will need to be reapplied after rains and regularly to maintain effectiveness. Mothballs and other chemicals should be avoided as repellents as they can inadvertently poison wildlife and domestic animals.

Removal of Nuisance Foxes

Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator can be contacted from a list on [Wildlifehelp.org/find-a-professional](https://wildlifehelp.org/find-a-professional). These private businesses and individuals are licensed in Delaware to perform nuisance wildlife operations year-round to help with human-wildlife conflict.

The second option available is contacting a recreational trapper. Recreational trappers are licensed private trappers who can only trap during the regulated trapping season ([Delaware Hunting Guide](#)). These trappers may be effective in more rural areas where legal trapping is more feasible.

Trapping of foxes can only be done by licensed NWCOS or licensed recreational trappers. Trapping and relocating wildlife in Delaware is not legal without the required permits from DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife. Wildlife may not be released onto public lands or onto private lands without landowner's permission.

Research

Gosselink, Todd E., et al. "Temporal Habitat Partitioning and Spatial Use of Coyotes and Red Foxes in East-Central Illinois." *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2003, pp. 90–103. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3803065>. Accessed 20 Mar. 2025.

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Poole, D. W. "Effectiveness of two types of electric fence for excluding the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).\" *Mammal Review* 32.1 (2002).

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