

Fact Sheet

European red fox

Restricted Invasive Animal

The European red fox is a restricted invasive animal under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. It must not be moved, kept, fed, given away, sold or released in the environment without a permit. All residents have a General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) under the Act. The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks posed by the European red fox. More information is available in the City of Ipswich Biosecurity Plan 2018-2023 at ipswich.qld.gov.au.

Scientific names

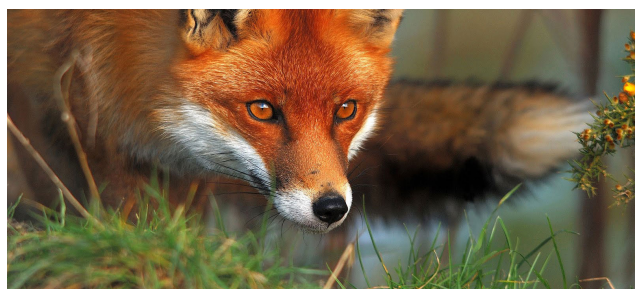
- *Vulpes vulpes*

Description

- Body is 45-90 centimetres long with a white tipped bushy tail that is 30-55 centimetres long.
- Females weigh around 4 kilograms and males around 6 kilograms.
- It has a pointed muzzle, large ears and a slender head.

Life cycle

- Foxes breed once a year in winter with cubs born in spring.
- Average litter size is four to ten pups, although there is a high mortality rate with up to 80% not living past the first year.
- Most foxes live less than 4 years.



Local habitat and distribution

- Habitation in the local Ipswich area is citywide.
- Foxes are widely spread throughout most of Queensland.
- They generally disperse from where they are born, and can vary between males and females; with some males dispersing up to 300 kilometres away.

Management strategy

- Management of this species falls under the asset-based protection management strategy.
- The objective of this strategy is to reduce the risk to social amenity, the environment and built assets.
- Once an invasive species becomes established and is beyond containment, the focus on management becomes about protecting key assets such as farm land, industry, recreational and environmental areas.
- The General Biosecurity Obligation for this species should involve:
 1. determining if the infestation represents a risk to an individual or surrounding properties
 2. identifying a remediation plan or property pest management plan to mitigate that risk, such as creating a buffer zone
 3. undertaking regular review or inspection of the infested area to ensure risks are mitigated over the long term.
- More information on the citywide management strategies for Ipswich (prevention, eradication, containment and asset-based protection) can be found in the City of Ipswich Biosecurity Plan 2018-2023.

Impact

- The European red fox preys on small or young animals, lambs, poultry and livestock.
- It's the greatest threat to long-term survival of many small marsupial species in Australia.
- Can spread disease to domestic animals.
- European red foxes are noted for 'surplus killing' and can kill multiple easy prey animals despite an abundance of food.

Control

Physical control

- Exclusion fencing is an option, although it must be well constructed and maintained due to the climbing ability of foxes and their ability to squeeze through small holes.
- Secure poultry runs and yards for small livestock should be considered in urban areas where foxes are a problem.
- Trapping is predominantly used in urban areas where poisoning and shooting are restricted or where there is a high risk to native species.
- Shooting of foxes is highly selective and used in rural Australia.
- Guard animals, primarily maremma dogs and alpacas can be used to protect sheep and goats from foxes. This control technique is most suited to small properties on the urban fringe.



Chemical control

- There are three poisons legally available for the control of foxes in Queensland:
 1. Sodium fluoroacetate (1080)
 2. Strychnine
 3. Para amino propiophenone (PAPP)
- 1080 and PAPP poison baits are economical and effective methods of controlling foxes. Only authorised persons can supply these baits to landholders.
- A Queensland Health permit is required to purchase strychnine.
- All property neighbours should be notified at least 72 hours prior to baiting, and baiting signage should be erected at every property entrance, and left for at least one month after baiting.
- Based on fox biology, the optimum time to bait is in spring.
- To effectively reduce the short and long term impact of foxes, it is highly recommended that baiting activities be co-ordinated among joining properties.

For further information visit ipswich.qld.gov.au/pests or [Biosecurity.qld.gov.au](https://biosecurity.qld.gov.au)

Images source: The State of Queensland (through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)[2019]

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