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Controlling Foxes

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controlling

Foxes

Prepared by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Agriculture Administration Building, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, in cooperation with State agricultural, conservation and health agencies.

Foxes, common in most of the United States, are classified into three groups: red, gray and kit.

The red fox ranges throughout the United States except for the extreme southeast and southwest and prefers open country with moderate cover. The gray fox range includes the eastern United States and the southwest. They like moderate cover such as thickets and swamplands. The kit fox is found in the desert regions in the west.

Foxes generally use abandoned burrows of woodchucks or other animals, but will use any site, even close to or under farm buildings. Foxes are most active at night and, therefore, may be common in an area yet rarely seen. The pups are generally born in March or April, with an average of five to a litter. Fox diets include both animal and vegetable matter. Where foxes are a serious threat to livestock, especially lambs and poultry, or where disease such as rabies is present, their control is essential

CALLING

Artificial calls of rabbits or other animals in distress will bring foxes within rifle or shotgun range. The hunter should select a place at the edge of a clearing where terrain can be observed without more than a slight turn of the head. Light cover in front of the hunter is desirable. Clothing should blend with the background.

Blowing the call at one half to one minute intervals with each call lasting five to ten seconds will arouse the curiousity of foxes in the area. Do not move when a fox appears or be in a hurry to shoot. Gentle blowing of the call may bring a fox to within ten feet. Do not move the gun until ready to shoot. Where human habitation is dense, the use of a shotgun is recommended. If a fox does not appear in about 20 minutes, they may not be present or they may have seen you first. Move to another place and start again.

DEN HUNTING

Predation by foxes is pronounced during the whelping season when they are feeding their young. Damage is reduced or eliminated by the removal of the young These pups can be moved from the den by the use of engine exhaust fumes. Dens may also be "smoked" by building a fire in the entrance of the den. It may require 15 to 30 minutes for the young to leave the den. They will be groggy so give them time to clear the entrance before handling them. doing so, there will be little chance of scaring the pups that have not yet come to the entrance. Use of heavy gloves or an animal catching device is desirable to prevent injury to the handler.

TRAPPING

Trapping is the best control method. Traps suitable for foxes are the No. 2 double coil spring trap, the No. 2 double long spring trap and the No. 2 jump trap. The trap chain should be fastened to a trap stake (small cold-shut links are good for this purpose) and the stake driven in directly under the place where the trap is set. The chain can be folded and placed under or beside the trap.

Many different "sets" are successful but one of the best is the "dirt-hole" set. Dig a hole about 6 inches deep and 3 inches in diameter at a downward angle just behind the place where the trap is to be set. Set the trap about 1/2 inch below the ground, either beside a trail or a few feet from it.

Trap site for unused trail.

Trap sites for trail commonly used by livestock or people.

Cover the area within the jaws and over the trap pan with a piece of light canvas or light screen wire. The trap must be placed so that it does not wobble when pressed at various points. The dirt should be packed down firmly over the springs and the entire trap covered lightly with sifted soil up to the original level of the ground. Not more than a teaspoonful of scent should be placed in the back of the hole.



A fetid scent may be prepared by rotting eel, carp, or other rough fish. This is best done during the summer months when the container of fish can be placed outdoors away from human habitation. Small amounts of pulverized beaver castor, Tonquin musk or skunk musk may be added to this scent, but the trapper will have to experiment with it to obtain the best results. Fox urine is an excellent scent. It can be collected either from a captive fox or from foxes which have been trapped and killed. One-fourth pint of glycerine per pint of urine slows evaporation. Fox urine should not be used in a dirt-hole set.



Fox urine sprinkled on background bush

Trapping Equipment

All that is normally needed on a trap line is a knapsack for carrying equipment, traps, sifter with a 3/16 or 1/2inch screen, trap stakes, gloves (which should be used only for trapping), a 16 to 20 ounce carpenter's hammer with straight claws, and a bottle or two of scent. The factory oil finish on the traps should be replaced by an anti-rust staining process. This oil finish can also be removed if the traps are buried in moist soil for a week or two and rusted lightly. Traps and other trapping equipment should not be allowed to come in contact with gas, oil, or other contaminating materials in a car or truck. Cleanliness of equipment is absolutely necessary to make consistent catches.

Removal from Traps

A fox in a trap can be immobilized quickly by a hard blow across the bridge of the nose with a hammer handle. The animal can then be removed from the trap and carried a short distance away to be dispatched without contaminating the immediate area.