

## **Foxes**

The first successful introduction of European red foxes into Australia occurred in 1871, although foxes were reported as introduced as early as 1855. Foxes were first reported in Western Australia in 1911-12. Within 100 years, foxes had covered the entire mainland area of Australia except the tropical north. The spread of foxes throughout Australia was closely linked to the spread of rabbits.

Foxes population densities range in numbers from 0.2 adults per square kilometre up to 12 adults per square kilometre in some urban populations.

Females breed only once per year, with an average litter size of four up to a maximum of about ten. Most cubs are born in August and September. Foxes become mature from about 10 months of age.

Although social groups of foxes are thought to exist, most males are thought to have one mate. Fox groups have well defined home ranges with stable borders. The size of the home range depends on the availability of food and varies from 30 hectares in urban areas to 1600 hectares in open areas.

The fox is an opportunistic predator and scavenger. The fox has been recognised as a serious threat to Australian native fauna, with foxes identified as a factor limiting the success of seven out of ten mainland reintroductions of native fauna.

Recent evidence suggests that foxes may take from 10-30% of lambs in some areas, which is much higher than previously thought.

Foxes are controlled by poisoning using 1080 baits, shooting, trapping and den fumigation. Which methods of control are best depends on the location of the foxes, and the risks posed by the control method utilised (which largely depends on the skill of the person undertaking the control).

