



Trapping Foxes

A fox may have taken your chooks, be raiding your garbage bin or be eating the dog and cat food from your verandah. Trapping a fox takes patience and effort. By following the instructions below, you stand the best chance of success.

Before you trap

Make sure you have pre-arranged the safe and humane disposal of any animal you catch. There are also professional trappers who will trap problem feral animals for you. Search the yellow pages for pest controllers who specialize in vertebrate pest control.

Trap site location

Select a location where the fox will investigate without suspicion. Examples of suitable locations are positions adjacent to holes under a fence, beside poultry enclosures, guinea pig pens or similar.

Set the trap where you have seen the fox walking by or where it has gained access to your chook pen. The fox needs to find the food.

Cover the bottom of the cage with sand. Foxes really like sand. They will be suspicious if they can feel the cage under their feet. Make sure the sand does not obstruct the closing and locking of the door or the working of any foot-plate mechanism.

The cage should not rock when the fox walks inside as this will scare the fox.

Get to know how the trap works

Set it up and activate the release mechanism.

The locking bar should drop down freely and lock the door tightly.

Fox food

The preferred food is any meat, chicken necks, dog food, sardines, lightly cooked or raw fresh chicken, fresh rabbit, kangaroo, pork, lamb, or anything the fox has been eating at your place including the chickens they may have killed and left behind.

Some people have foxes eating their cat's biscuits, if so, use cat biscuits as food.

Only use fresh meat as foxes prefer fresh food. They also don't like meat with ants crawling all over it. Replace the food every 2 days.

Free-feeding

It is important to "free-feed" prior to setting the trap to go off. Establishing a pattern of visitation to the trap for food is essential to successful cage trapping of foxes.

Setting the Trap

Disguise the trap using branches or other vegetation so it doesn't look out of place in the environment. Make sure the disguise doesn't impair the working of the trap.

In foot-plate activated traps, wire the food onto the internal rear mesh, approximately midway up the panel or to the hook release mechanism in the hook-activated trap.

Place a piece of backing at the rear of the trap. This is to dissuade the fox from investigating the food from behind the trap. The backing can be a log, cut branch or anything natural that will block easy access from the back.

Set the trap door release mechanism and test it. It is important to ensure that the trap door will close quickly without fouling. You will only get one chance to capture the fox, so ensure that all is in working order by conducting a test.

Take a step back and examine the trap location. Does it look as natural as it possibly can? Ensure that all evidence of human activity has been removed.

Set the trap at dusk and unset the trap in the morning. This will reduce the risk of other non-target animals taking the food out of the trap.

Set the cage door in the open position and lock it with a piece of string or wire to keep it open. In the free-feeding phase you want the fox to become familiar and comfortable with the trap door open.

Dig a small hole at the selected location, place the food in the hole and cover with soil (6mm approx). When fox activity is noted at the food station, start to move the food towards and then into the trap. Keep repeating the process until the fox is eating the food from inside the trap. It could take a few days before the fox is taking the food from inside the cage.

Once the fox is taking the food from inside the trap, set the trap to go off. Bury some just outside the trap and tie some on the hook or to the back of the cage and release the locking string. If all goes well the fox should take the food buried at the front and then try to get it from inside the cage. This will activate the cage trapdoor and trap the fox.

Trap size and design

Our research has shown that the longer the trap, the better. A cage type fox trap should be a minimum 1200 mm long. This is to ensure the fox is fully within the trap before the door comes down. They have been seen to use their tails to stop the door fully closing, enabling the fox to turn and get out under the door.

The trap should be a minimum of 400mm high x 400mm wide. Cage traps with a treadle type trip mechanism (floor mounted) or a hook-activated pull mechanism are both acceptable. Cage traps should be well constructed to prevent the captured animal escaping. Foxes are very strong and can tear small gauge wire apart with their teeth. Professionally built traps are readily available.

People

Limit the number of people going near the trap as the fox has a sense of smell 10 times better than a dog. The smell of humans will fade after two days but the fox will be extra wary if he can smell more than two or three different people around the trap.

Keep domestic animals such as dogs well away from the trap. Another fox's smell will attract a fox to the trap.

Use disposable gloves when handling the trap or the food.

When you trap the fox

Cover the cage with a blanket or tarp to minimise the stress to the fox. It will know it has made a big mistake and be feeling quite bad anyway, no need to make it feel any worse.

Call your nominated professional to humanely euthanise and dispose of the animal.



Contact Details:



Fox Dens

Fox dens should NOT be destroyed as they can be monitored for the presence of foxes.

If there is a fox in the area, chances are it will take up residence in the den and then you can work on catching it.

Contact the **Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)** on info@agric.wa.gov.au or freecall 1800 084 881 if you are a rural landowner and want further information on alternative fox control methods and to obtain permits for the use of poisons.

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Special thanks go out to the many local residents who volunteered their time to participate in this program.



GeoCatch



Fox photograph supplied by Harley Kingston: harlz.com

FOX TRAPPING Using Cage TRAPS



The red fox is a skilled hunter of wildlife and domestic poultry and has adapted well to living amongst humans in urban and peri-urban areas. Cage trapping was seen as one way to safely control foxes areas where it is not safe to bait or shoot.

In 2010 three local governments received State NRM funding to investigate the best way to work with their communities to cage trap foxes.

This protocol outlines the findings of this project.