

# RED FOX

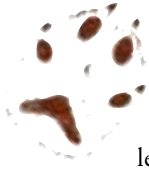
(*Vulpes vulpes*)

Canid Family/Carnivore



Red foxes are highly adaptable and one of Canada's most widespread mammals. It is estimated there are more red foxes now than when Europeans first arrived in the 16th century.

Territorial pairs mate for life although they may separate during the year, especially if hunting is poor. A solitary hunter, red foxes will catch and hide food for later use in **caches**. Foxes avoid coyote habitat.



Newborn pups weigh up to 150 g. Their eyes open at 2 weeks of age and they are **weaned** by 10 weeks. The pups leave the family den to claim their own territories by fall.

**Special features:** The red fox has a slim build, a deep chest and a thin waist. It has a long, pointed **muzzle**, black nose and large, pointed ears. Adult foxes weigh between 3.6 and 6.8 kg and range in length from 90 to 112 cm, of which about one-third is tail.

The red fox is most commonly a rusty red but can also be yellow, orange, black, grey or brown in colour. It has a white underbelly, black ear tips and legs. The bushy tail has a white tip, which helps distinguish it from the grey fox, which has a black tipped tail.

Their eyes are gold or yellow with distinctive vertically slit pupils, similar to those of a cat. The tail provides balance for long jumps and helps keep the fox warm when sleeping in winter. Unlike the dog, the fox has furred footpads.

Red foxes have excellent sight, hearing and sense of smell. They are able to run at speeds of over 70 km/hr.

**Food:** Mice, muskrats, beaver, squirrels, rabbits and hares, seal pups, eggs and birds, shellfish, fish, small reptiles, **amphibians**, insects, corn, grasses, fruits and berries, **carion**, garbage and pet food.

**Denning:** Hollow logs, caves, abandoned **burrows**, digs dens under dense brush or under built structures. Prefers brush-covered slopes with sandy soil. Usually red foxes maintain solitary dens, except during the breeding season and while **rearing** the young. Fox pairs may have two or more dens close to each other connected by tunnels. They will sometimes move litters of pups from one den to another to escape danger.

**Predators:** Wolves, coyotes, bobcats, lynx and cougars.



The red fox has slit-like pupils that can take in a maximum of light at night.



Red fox pups begin leaving the den at 5 weeks of age.

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## Distribution:

All Provinces and Territories

## Maturity:

8 to 10 months

## Average life span:

3 to 5 years

## Mating:

February thru April

## Young born:

March to May

## Gestation:

51 to 53 days

1 litter a year/Average 5 pups

## Habitat:

Thinly treed woodlands, **tundra**, grasslands, hillsides, including agricultural and urban areas.

## Management Issues:

A carrier of rabies and **mange**, the fox helps spread disease by its long distance travels. Foxes prey on animals that damage crops but, as **surplus killers**, are a threat to poultry and livestock.

