

## **Foxes are known for their resourcefulness, cleverness and adaptability.**

### **Description**

Foxes are mammals. They are the smallest member of the dog family, the Canidae, and are the size of a large cat. Other canids include wolves, coyotes, arctic foxes and domestic dogs.

Fox species include the red fox, the gray fox, the arctic fox, the kit fox and the fennec fox.

The red fox is the most common species of the foxes. The scientific name of the red fox is *Vulpes vulpes*.

A male fox is known as a dog, tod, vix, or reynard.

A female fox is known as a vixen.

Young foxes are called kits, cubs, or pups.

A group of foxes is known as a skulk.

Foxes usually have 4-5 pups, born in the spring.

A mother fox (vixen) takes unusually good care of her young, bringing home game for meals and teaching proper hunting techniques for a long period of time. But her mood will change the instant she senses the young foxes can fend for themselves. She snarls and bares her teeth to drive them from the den area, forcing them to seek out new territory.

Foxes make an odd assortment of sounds, many unlike other canids:

- \* A coughing bark as an alarm;
- \* A series of three, four, or five sharp barks as a call;
- \* A grumbling, throaty, staccato stutter when on the defense (gekkring);
- \* A drawn-out monotone wail during mating season;
- \* Various other noises such as hissing, squeaking, chirping, and even purring.
- \* Foxes rarely, if ever, growl.

### **Habitat**

They live all over North America and across the world in diverse habitats (forests, grasslands, mountains, and deserts).

Although foxes mostly live and hunt alone, they occasionally live as pairs or small family groups.

Foxes do not generally use dens, but may choose to den during cold winter weather. They often sleep out in the open, and do not hibernate or go into a deep sleep (torpor).

### **Diet**

Foxes are omnivores, eating fruits, berries, grasses, as well as a variety of small prey.

They are opportunistic, feeding on anything they can find.

Foxes hunt by sight, smell and sound, all of which are extremely keen.

To kill their prey, foxes use a pouncing technique similar to that of cats.

The fox is a solitary animal and usually hunts alone, rather than in packs like wolves or dogs.

### **Other Facts**

The kit fox, or swift fox, can run up to 23 mph for short distances.

Foxes may be diurnal (active during the day), nocturnal (active at night), and/or crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk), though are considered primarily to be nocturnal.

Foxes have vertically-oriented pupils in their eyes, similar to cats but unlike other canids.

Although dogs, coyotes, and wolves can interbreed among themselves, the fox cannot successfully mate with any other species of canid due to its genetic code. It has a different number of chromosomes.

Most foxes live two or three years in the wild (and up to six), but can survive ten or more years in captivity.

Foxes are rarely a danger to humans. But advise your cats and bunnies to look over their shoulders.

A fox's hearing is so sharp they can hear a watch ticking 40 yards away.

For more fox information, go to:

[www.thefoxwebsite.org](http://www.thefoxwebsite.org)

**OR**

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/red-fox.html>