

## Red foxes behavior

Red foxes have a large and diverse diet. They are excellent hunters and have a sharp sense of sight and smell. They can smell and hear their prey easily with pinpoint accuracy, even while prey is underground or unseen. This is why they make excellent hunters of small animals such as rodents like voles and mice, as well as lemmings, hares and rabbits. They have been known to hunt chickens on farms, earning them the nickname “chicken thieves”. However, they do not just eat meat – foxes are also known to eat berries, other fruits and nuts, as well as garbage and pet food when given the opportunity. Their diets will vary with the seasons and with their habitats. Even when a fox is full, it will be hunting – it is always looking to store food (cache) for its next meal. Foxes are capable of a few vocalizations. Most of the time, foxes will make a sharp barking noise that is commonly mistaken for an owl hooting. This bark is used as an identification system to differentiate between foxes. They also make a scream-like variation of a howl that has been dubbed a “Vixen’s Scream”, though males also make this noise. This vixen’s scream can be heard commonly during mating season as it is thought to be used to lure mates. Red foxes have an alarm call that is a mix of a sharp bark and a cough, which is used to warn others of nearby danger. While most communication between foxes is soft and quiet, they also use a form of communication called “gekkering”, which sounds like a guttural chattering combined with yelps and howls. It is heard mostly during territorial standoffs between adult foxes but can also be heard among play-fighting kits. As red foxes are solitary animals, they do not live in packs. In order to mark their territory, they make scent posts on trees or rocks (through urination) to announce their presence. They also use their tails to signal and communicate with other foxes. There are some situations where a couple of foxes will habituate in the same general area (or with overlapping territories) and a social hierarchy must be established. Foxes that are determined to be submissive will greet the dominant fox with a high-pitched whining that can elevate to a shriek. Red foxes do not emit a strong odor but they do have musk glands at the bases of their tails (similar to dogs) that aid in individual recognition. While this is a dog-like trait, red foxes also possess some traits that are similar to cats – for example, they use their long, bushy tails for balance and they slink around and run and pounce like a cat.