



# How to Catch a Fox

Two Parts: [Catching an Adult Fox](#) [Disposing of a Captured Fox](#)

Small, omnivorous, wily predators and scavengers, foxes can sometimes be serious nuisances, especially to farmers or other people with small, domesticated animals. Whether it's been sneaking into your hen house or harassing your pets, knowing how to effectively catch a troublesome fox can be a very useful skill to have. In addition, knowing how to deal with a fox you've already caught allows you make a decision that eliminates your fox problems while ensuring the humane treatment of the animal.

Part  
1

## Catching an Adult Fox

**1 Set a live trap in a location you expect fox to be.** For the vast majority of foxes, standard "boxy" live traps of a suitable size work quite well. These traps resemble a long rectangular box with trap doors at one (or either) end. The fox, lured in by bait, steps on a pedal, which releases the trap door(s) and locks it in.

- Live traps are available to buy or rent at most hunting goods stores and also online from specialty retailers. For the medium to medium-large traps suitable for catching foxes, prices usually range from about \$40-80.<sup>[1]</sup>

**2 Bait the trap.** Set your trap in the "open" position and carefully place your bait in the designated space in the center. You have a wide variety of options when it comes to picking your bait — for instance, you may want to use pork, "wet" cat food, fish, chicken, or other meat. If you're a hunter, you may alternatively want to use game meat (bobcat and beaver work especially well).<sup>[2]</sup>

- The scent of the bait you use is important. Foxes have strong noses that they use to sniff out food sources, so, if possible, try to use bait with a strong, appealing odor.<sup>[3]</sup> If you're using cat food, try to use one with a strong fishy scent — foxes love this.

**3 Let the trap sit out overnight.** Though it's possible to see foxes at almost any time of the day, the animals are usually nocturnal predators.<sup>[4]</sup> For this reason, once you set a trap, you'll want to be very patient, waiting at least one night for results. Check on your trap in the morning to see if you've caught your troublesome fox. Don't be surprised if you find a raccoon, skunk, rat, possum, or other small mammal in the trap — these animals can also be attracted to the same sorts of baits that foxes like.

- Don't let the trap sit out for more than a day or so without checking on it. Doing this can cause a trapped fox to suffer from hunger or exposure.

**4 Alternatively, try digging a hole trap.** If you don't have a live box trap and don't want to bother renting or buying one, this free alternative can also work well. To make a hole trap, dig a deep, steep-sided hole near a tree, a stump, or another natural obstruction so that the fox can only enter the hole from one side. Place your bait in the bottom of the hole and cover the top of the trap with branches and leaves to obscure it. If the hole is steep enough, the fox will fall in while looking for the bait and be unable to climb out until you come back for it.

- Many sources recommend placing a leg snare trap at the bottom of the hole to ensure that the fox is truly stuck once it falls into the hole. If you're thinking about doing this, be sure to check your local jurisdictions first. Since leg snare traps can potentially injure or maim the animal, they're not always legal.<sup>[5]</sup> In addition, you may want to consider whether such a trap is compatible with your personal ethics.

**5 Try step baiting.** Foxes aren't stupid — the wily creatures will sometimes be able to tell when a trap is a trap and will avoid it, even when there's bait in it. To counter this, try the strategy of step-baiting. The first night, put your bait outside the trap, but near it. If you notice the next morning that the bait is gone, the following night, put it just inside

the trap, but not near the pedal that springs the trap doors. If the bait vanishes again, try putting the bait in the middle of the trap the third night. Often, this gradual progression will trick a fox into thinking that a source of bait is "safe" until it's greedy enough to fall for the trap.

- If you're still having trouble, the fox may be smelling your scent on the trap. Try carefully washing the trap with hot or boiling water to remove your scent. You may also want to try sprinkling some fox urine (available at many hunting goods stores) around the trap — foxes can be territorial, so another fox's scent can cause it to investigate the trap closely.<sup>[6]</sup>

**6 Avoid inhumane traps.** Even if your end goal is to kill the animal, it's important not to allow the fox to suffer in the process. Causing unnecessary suffering to an animal is cruel, immoral, and unfair. For this reason, you'll want to stay away from traps that injure the animal in the act of trapping it. For instance, steel-jawed leg traps can break the fox's leg when they snap closed on it and wire snares can cut off circulation to the animal's limb, causing it to die. In general, traps that work by suddenly gripping or snapping shut on part of the animal shouldn't be used. In addition, to being inhumane, these sorts of traps can also be illegal and carry stiff fines for their use, depending on where you live.<sup>[7]</sup>

**7 Euthanize an injured fox.** If, for whatever reason you manage to seriously injure a fox while trying to catch it, you will probably want to euthanize the animal (or call a professional to do it for you). Releasing a maimed animal back into the wild can cause the animal to suffer for days before it eventually starves, dies of disease, or is killed by a predator. Quick, relatively pain-free euthanasia is almost always a better alternative in this case.

- Humane killing methods are generally those that cause instant (or near-instant) unconsciousness followed by quick death without giving the animal a chance to panic or suffer. Different animal welfare groups will have different definitions of what a humane killing method is, but, in general, methods like shooting the animal in the head, stunning it with electricity and then cutting its throat, and using pain-free gases are considered humane by most authorities.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Part 2

### Disposing of a Captured Fox

**1 Handle all foxes with extreme caution.** Once you've captured a fox, you'll want to be very careful about the way you handle it, even if it appears securely confined to its trap. Carry the trap away from your body, holding it only by a safe handhold that's well out of the fox's reach. Never stick your fingers into the cage, shake the cage, or purposely agitate the animal. Foxes caught in live traps are likely to be scared for their lives, which means that they have the potential to lash out and bite or scratch you, even if they appear docile on the surface.

- Note that foxes can carry a variety of diseases including rabies, a deadly viral disease for which there is no cure besides receiving a vaccination after being bit. If you are ever bitten or scratched by a fox, contact a doctor right away. Though rabies is rare in foxes, it can lead to a long, painful, and ultimately fatal illness, so it's always better to be safe than sorry.<sup>[9]</sup>

**2 Release it into the wild.** One option when you've captured a fox is to take it somewhere far away and let it go free. This method has the benefit of causing no immediate harm to the fox. However, it's important to note that, because foxes are territorial creatures, they will sometimes return to their original location even if they have to travel a long way to get there. In addition, because of competition from other predators and differing habitat conditions, there is always a chance that a fox released into the wild away from its home will eventually die anyway.<sup>[10]</sup>

- If you do decide to release your captured fox into the wild, be sure to do so safely. Orient the trap away from you, then carefully open the trap door to release the fox. Don't pursue the fox once it leaves the trap — it will likely be agitated and can potentially react with hostility, though this is rare.

**3 Call an animal control service.** For many, having a professional deal with a captured fox is much preferable to the prospect of doing it on their own. Nearly all local animal control agencies will be willing to take a wild fox off of your hands, saving you the hassle of deciding what to do yourself. If you don't know how to contact local animal control services, in the U.S., try contacting the ASPCA, or the Humane Society (whose contact info is available on their respective organization websites) for instructions.<sup>[11][12]</sup>

- Understand that, unfortunately, many animal control services will humanely euthanize the fox after you give it to them. This is because, as noted above, foxes are known carriers of rabies and other diseases.<sup>[13]</sup>

**4 If legal in your area, consider humanely killing the fox.** If the fox you've just caught has been causing you serious trouble, you may want to kill it to make sure you're rid of it for good. In this case, be sure to consult your local laws before killing the fox to ensure you're not doing something illegal. In the vast majority of cases, killing a fox to protect your property or eliminate a nuisance will not be considered illegal.<sup>[14]</sup> However, some states and jurisdictions may have rules that can limit your ability to kill foxes, especially if you need to kill many foxes, want to kill them for commercial purposes, or need to kill them during an "off-season" time.

- For example, in the state of North Carolina, the laws governing foxes vary greatly from county to county. For instance, in Gates County, fox trapping season lasts only during the month of January and you are limited to a maximum "bag" limit of 30 foxes. On the other hand, in Forsyth County, there is no fox trapping season or bag limit.
- If you do opt to kill a captured fox, always use one of the humane killing methods described above.

**5 Know the warning signs of an aggravated fox.** No matter what you plan to do with your captured fox, it's important to know the signs of danger so that you can respond to them quickly and decisively, should they occur. Many of the signs that an angry fox will give off are similar to those used by dogs. For instance, if the hair on its back is standing up, its tail is straight, or it is growling, snarling, or baring its teeth, the fox is angry and may react with hostility. In this case, always leave matters to a professional.

- It's also a very good idea to know the signs of a rabid fox. If the fox is stumbling as if it were drunk, seems partially paralyzed, is hurting itself, or is acting extremely aggressive or unnaturally calm, it may be rabid.<sup>[15]</sup> In this case, you *definitely* need to contact a professional — rabies is a very serious disease and should not be treated lightly.

**6 Consider taking the fox's fur.** Foxes are sometimes trapped or hunted for their soft natural pelt. The fur of a fox can potentially be very valuable — it's not unusual for a real fox fur coat or boot to retail for several thousand dollars or more. If you're an experienced skinner, you may want to consider humanely killing the animal, then *skinning it* and *treating its hide* so that you may sell it to a fur vendor. However, note that the act of killing an animal for its fur is usually more tightly-regulated than the act of killing it to rid yourself of a pest, so, as always, consult your local laws before proceeding.

- Don't try to take a fox's fur if you don't know what you're doing. Knowing how to skin an animal is a difficult skill that can require lots of practice to perfect. Attempting to skin a dead fox when you've never done so before may end up in the fur being ruined, making the fox's death a waste.

**7 Carefully wash yourself after handling a fox.** Even if you don't come into direct contact with your captured fox, you'll want to carefully give your hands and arms (and, if necessary, your body and clothing) a thorough washing after handling its trap. Like many wild animals, foxes can be quite dirty even if they don't appear so. They may, for instance, have small amounts of blood on them from a recent kill or may have tiny traces of fecal matter in their fur. In addition, they may carry parasites like fleas or ticks (especially cat fleas).<sup>[16]</sup> Because you have no way of knowing where exactly a fox has been, it's usually best to be safe.

- You'll also want to wash your trap as well to avoid the possibility of future contamination. Scrub all of its surfaces with hot water and soap, then use a hose to rinse it. Finally, dry it with a towel or rag to prepare it for future use.

## Community Q&A

**Is a baby fox walking around yesterday while I was on a walk. It looked really skinny so I thought it might be starving and wanted to catch it and bring it home. Is it possible to tame a baby fox?**

wikiHow  
Contributor

A fox is a wild animal and should be treated as one, however needy and weak it looks. There are laws about catching wild animals because of safety concerns. But if the fox was seen near your house, you could leave food out for it (a safe distance from the house at first, then moving it progressively closer). Foxes are very afraid of people in most

cases, but you may be able to make it "a pet that lives in the wild."

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### If a fox escapes and attacks me, should I run to my house?

wikiHow  
Contributor

If you are attacked, stand up and pull your extremities towards your chest. Look the fox in the eye and show no fear. If the fox continues, back off, do not run, into open territory. If you can, back off to your house as the fox knows that this is your territory, not theirs.

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### I trap rabbits, and use the rabbits for fox bait, but sometimes dogs tear my snared rabbits up. Is there a way to stop this?

wikiHow  
Contributor

Not really, no. If you tried to disguise the scent of the rabbit, the fox would not recognize it either. There's not much you can do.

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## Tips

- If you're ever in doubt, contact an animal control expert.

## Warnings

- Fox are carriers of rabies, and any bite needs immediate medical treatment
- Don't attempt to care for injured foxes or nurse them back to health. Instead, contact a professional.

## Things You'll Need

- A professional (if you are not the one)
- Blanket (for baby fox)
- Animal net (quite big depending on size of fox)
- R.S.P.C.A Or vet phone number (for emergencies)

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.havahart.com/advice/animal-trapping/trap-guide>
2. <http://www.wildlifeanimalcontrol.com/foxcatch.html>
3. <http://www.wildlifeanimalcontrol.com/foxcatch.html>

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