

Fox Control

REDUCING THEIR IMPACT IN THE NORTHERN AND YORKE NRM REGION



Introduction of Foxes into Australia

European red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) were introduced into Australia in the mid nineteenth century by colonial huntsmen for sport. Several introduction events occurred, with establishment following two releases at Ballarat and Geelong in Victoria in 1871. Within 100 years, and with the exception of the tropical north, foxes had dispersed throughout mainland Australia.

Territory and Reproduction

Foxes usually live in family groups with limited overlap of their home ranges. Their "home range" can consist of 30 - 1,000 hectares, but individuals can make excursions of more than 10km. They are generally active at night, dusk and dawn, but activity outside of these times is not unusual.

In summer juvenile foxes disperse to find new territories and reproduce, and it is common for them to have several different dens within their claimed territory. Females breed only once during the annual fox breeding season, which runs from July to October in south-eastern Australia. Males and females are generally monogamous, but non-breeding females often help to raise their young. A female averages four pups in a litter.

Biology

The adult fox weighs 5-7 kilograms. It has excellent sight, smell, and hearing for skilled hunting. Foxes also possess canine teeth, speed and agility (including limited climbing ability).

Foxes are mainly carnivorous and feed on sheep (mainly as carrion), mice, rabbits and native animals including the Sleepy Lizard, Mallee Fowl, Tammar Wallaby, Yellow-Footed Rock Wallaby, Numbat, Brush-Tailed Bettong, Bilby and eggs in tortoise nests. They also feed on insects and fruit and are known to raid rubbish bins in urban areas. The fox is Australia's number one predator.

Diseases and Mortality

Foxes are susceptible to sarcoptic mange which they pass on to other animals such as wombats and heartworm which they can pass on to dogs and cats.

Natural death rates are high, so most foxes in the wild are no more than one or two years old. The most frequent cause of death in foxes is from human action such as baiting, trapping and hunting.

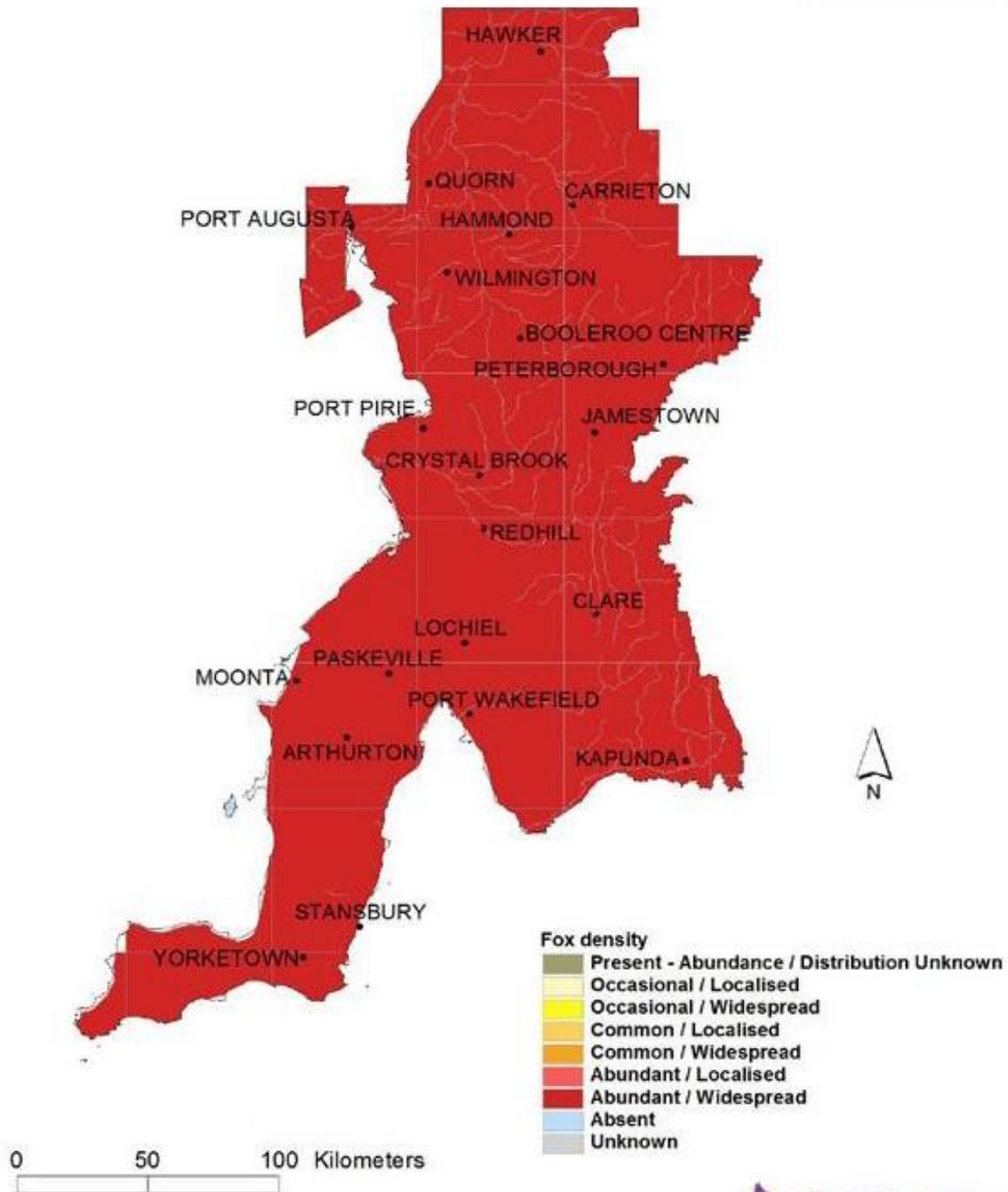
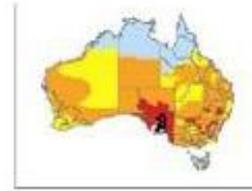


Natural Resources
Northern & Yorke



Government
of South Australia

Fox density 2007 Northern and Yorke NRM Region



Compiled by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre and the National Land and Water Resources Audit in collaboration with the Australian, State and Territory governments (2007).

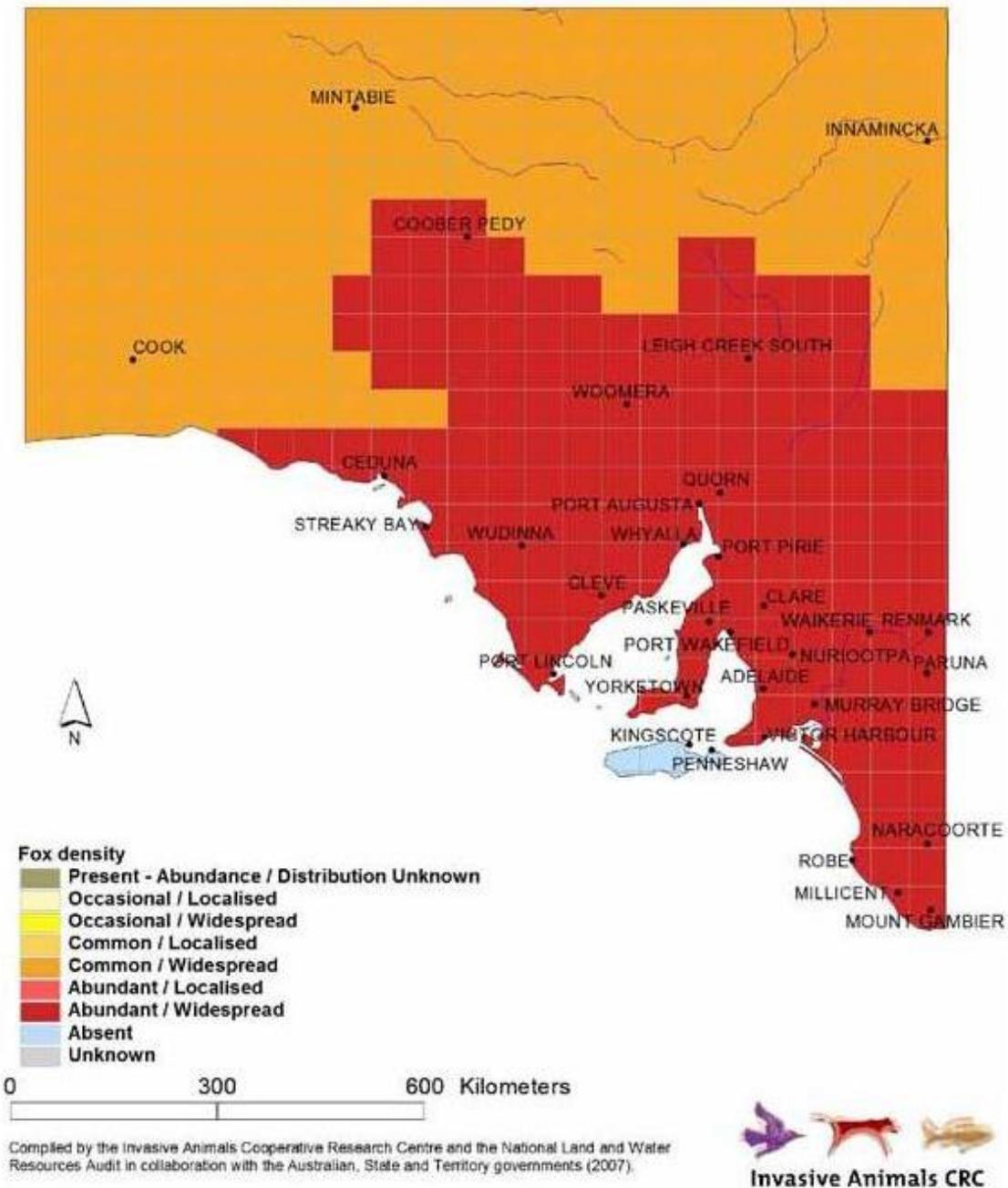
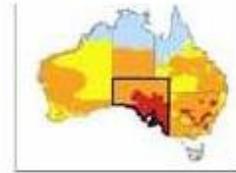


Natural Resources
Northern & Yorke



Government
of South Australia

Fox density 2007 South Australia



Natural Resources
Northern & Yorke



Government
of South Australia

Environmental and agricultural impacts

Foxes are estimated to cost Australia more than \$228 million per year in combined environmental and agricultural impacts and control costs. The direct impact on sheep production alone is estimated at \$17.5 million per year. In some areas, there are reports of foxes taking up to 30% of lambs. The control of foxes is therefore deemed a natural resource management priority.

Coordinated Group Baiting

A coordinated baiting program using injected baits and/or Fox-Off Econobaits twice a year, with bait replacement until the uptake is reduced, is an effective and environmentally conscious form of fox control in most rural areas.

Effective fox control requires thorough planning and monitoring to ensure that the application is appropriate and that non-target species are not affected. Fox control programs need to be on-going and carefully managed to enable continued protection of wildlife as well as stock and domestic animals such as dogs which are particularly vulnerable to fox baits.

Transient foxes are easily able to repopulate an area if a control program is carried out only once a year. A coordinated fox control approach with adjoining properties can build upon your own efforts and maximise the control of foxes as well as reducing costs for individuals. If your land adjoins a national park it might also be beneficial to contact your local Department of Environment and Natural Resources District office to see if the control programs can be co-ordinated.

Further information

The Natural Resources Northern and Yorke can provide you with advice about fox control or developing a coordinated control program.



Photo Acknowledgements

Fox density (both) – IA CRC and NLWRA
Fox photos (both) - Daryl Panther

The Board also thanks Philip Stott and www.feral.org.au for their support.

For more information

Natural Resources Centre - Clare (head office)

155 Main North Road

Clare SA 5453

Ph: (08) 8841 3400

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/northernandyorke



Natural Resources
Northern & Yorke



Government
of South Australia