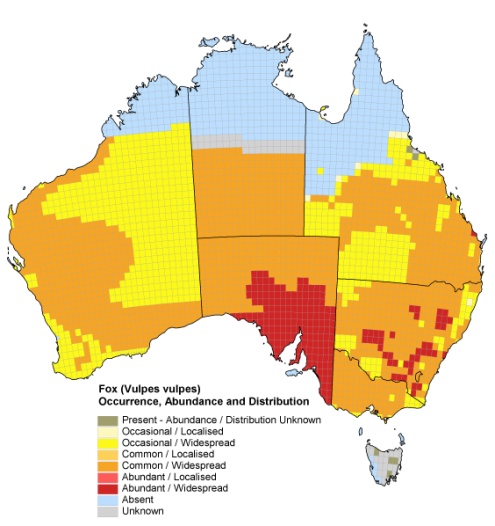
**The Red Fox in Australia**

## What?

* The red fox (*Vulpes vulpe*) is the largest of the ‘true foxes’, which include wolves, coyotes and jackals. They were introduced for the purpose of the traditional English sport of ‘fox hunting’.

## Where?

* Red foxes were introduced to the British Colonies, Van Diemen's Land (now known as Tasmania), Port Phillip District (area in the state of Victoria, formerly in New South Wales) and the Sydney regions of New South Wales.
* Currently, there are established populations of the Red Fox in all states of Australia with the exception of Tasmania and northern Queensland.

## When?

* Red foxes were introduced as early as 1830s
* The spread of red foxes across the south of Australia coincided with the spread of rabbits in Australia. This was also an alien species introduced in the 19th century, and also was the main prey of the red fox.

## Impacts

**Native species at risk from red foxes**

* The red fox has caused a number of predators to be at risk from fox predation; 19 marsupial species (including five species of wallaby), 4 rodent species and 7 bird species.
* Red foxes were one of the introduced predators which are responsible for the extinction of ten native species in West Australia.

**Agricultural**

* Foxes are known to kill young lambs; may account for 30% of all new born lamb deaths.
* Although economic losses due to foxes may be secondary to other causes (such as starvation, disease etc.); Foxes may cause heavy losses on a local scale.

**Environmental**

* The fox is seen as a major threatening process to many species of native wildlife; especially to the survival of a range of fauna.
* Australian fauna did not co-evolve with the fox; studies have indicated that there is a substantial amount of predation on indigenous fauna.

## Solutions

* Local eradication programs exist but are difficult due to denning behaviour and noctural hunting, therefore the focus is more on management by setting up state boundaries.
* The main form of control is the use of baits, containing a poison in order to eradicate them.
* Fox hunting is legal in all states, they are usually hunted using spotlights during night and fox whistles during the day.
* Another method suggested is the introduction of competitive species, such as introducing Tasmanian devil to the mainland to perform a similar role as evidenced by the eradication of foxes in Tasmania.
* Western Australian state government authorities conduct aerial and hand baiting on almost 35,000 km² (8.75 million acres) to control foxes (and feral cats) as part of the Western Shield pest management program.

## Conclusion

I strongly believe that the red fox’s introduction has had extremely devastating effects upon Australia’s native species (total of 30 species) and native wildlife. It has been hard to eradicate them as they are an apex predator; therefore a competitive species needs to be introduced. This in itself may be a problem because introducing a new species would have further knock-on effects to the ecology of the area. One suggestion which has been made is the introduction of the Tasmanian Devil to the mainland. Another method would be, poisoning them using 1080 poison in the form of bait, this leaves this vulnerable to other species as well as humans (especially children) which would leave fatal effects. Overall, the red fox does not cause severe agricultural impacts on a continental scale, but on a local scale it may show some heavier impacts. Although this can be easily resolved with the use of heavy duty fencing in order prevent intrusion.