

The “October Crazies”

I want to talk about the October Crazies because it is a phrase thrown around by new owners all the time. It is misunderstood all around. The original owner “Ragtatter” who coined the term certainly did not mean for people to fear the October Crazies or to come up with all sorts of strange theories about it. It was just a cute title she used on an article she typed regarding her fox Gizmo coming of age and her own theorizing. Read it here: <http://www.thepetfox.net/2011/09/pet-fox-behavior-october-crazies.html>.

October is the month when young foxes are finally reaching adulthood. This is called puberty. Maturation occurs at 8 months of age. Since the majority of red foxes are born in April, puberty winds up being sometime in October.

Puberty is nothing to be scared of in a fox. If you have read about adult foxes and understand typical fox behavior, you have nothing to worry about. We all know babies do not act like adults. Puppies and dogs don’t act the same. Kittens and cats don’t either. So why do we expect fox kits and foxes to be? Puberty is nothing more than adulting. During this time you may or may not notice changes in your fox, but mostly these changes are going to be because the animal is growing up. Foxes are shy, timid creatures that may behave aggressively out of defense. So if you see these behaviors, just grow with the fox. Learn to accept your pet the way it is becoming.

Aside from puberty, a huge physiological change is occurring within the fox--proteins and nutrients that normally stabilize the animal’s mood are going toward fur and fat production instead as winter approaches. This often makes them feel uncomfortable, and it is not uncommon for foxes during this time to be a little moody.

The body begins preparation for winter at the end of August, but it is in October when a fox’s body seems to become most sensitive. The vitamins are working to bulk up the animal, and this can destabilize a fox’s mood. When an animal is in discomfort, even cats and dogs, they often will lash out, even bite. So it is important that you watch for changes in your fox’s attitude.

Some fox owners will experience mood swings with their foxes during the winter months due to this discomfort and imbalance. The best you as an owner can do for your fox at this time are 1) leave it alone when it is upset, and 2) provide foods high in fat and taurine to promote fur growth as well as a stable attitude.

Some new owners get especially discouraged in their fox’s first year if its mood drastically changes due to the onset of winter. It can be difficult when the “October Crazies” is compounded like that, but there are two things you can do in the meantime to work through the woes. First, give the fox its space when it is clearly upset, stressed, or uncomfortable; don’t force yourself on the animal. Second, provide foods high in fat and taurine to promote fur growth and mental stability.

The extremity of the “October Crazies” varies between foxes and also winter-by-winter. Some owners may not notice any real changes at all, while others do. Sometimes a fox only experiences mood changes for a week, sometimes for longer. In addition, there are owners who may never experience the “October Crazies” in their life. It varies considerably and depends on the individual fox as well as that year’s circumstances.

So take heart. The “October Crazies” really isn’t crazy at all!

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