

Barbed wire is a major hazard for wildlife. Each year thousands of animals face a cruel death from entanglement on barbs, usually on the top strand. Over 70 species of Australian wildlife have been identified as occasional or regular victims of barbed wire fences, especially nocturnal animals such as bats, gliders and owls. Many fail to see the fence, or cannot clear the height under windy conditions. Most of those rescued are too severely damaged to return to the wild.

There are also other fencing hazards. Kangaroos get hung up in fences that are too high, whether plain or barbed, a situation perhaps made worse by the bottom strand of a fence being too low. Wetlands fenced too close to the water-line prevent wetland birds from landing or taking off.

Wildlife friendly fencing (WFF) is fencing that is safe and effective for wildlife, people and livestock:

- WFF does not entangle or harm wildlife
- WFF allows the appropriate free movement of wildlife across rural and urban landscapes.
- WFF may mean no fence at all.

WFF avoids the use of barbed wire, especially on the top strand of fences, and where fences are in hotspots for entanglement. Hotspots include ridge lines, feed trees, wildlife corridors, new fences and fences over/near water bodies. 86% of entanglements occur on the top strand of wire.



wildlife friendly fencing in action

Geoff, a farmer near Cardwell in north Queensland, noticed an animal caught on his barbed wire fence. The local wildlife carer quickly identified it as a female Mahogany Glider, an endangered species found only in that area. The glider had failed to make the distance between two trees, and the barbs of the fence caught her membrane. After months of rehabilitation she was eventually released. Several months later another female was entangled on the same stretch of barbed wire. The barbs tore her pouch and both babies died. The damage is likely to prevent her rearing future young.

Geoff realised it was time to make changes to his fences and considered his options:

- Make the fence more visible. Nocturnal animals can see a 1cm wide white tape that flickers in the wind better than grey wire.
- Make the top strand harmless by replacing barbed with plain wire, or covering it with polypipe split longitudinally.
- Plant trees to shorten the gliding distance for gliders between trees.

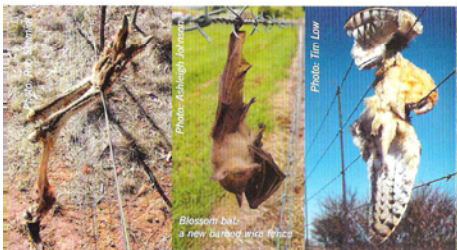
Geoff chose options 2 and 3 and no gliders have since been caught.

And in the city... Barbara arrived at work and noticed a flying fox caught on the barbed security fence. The fence had a row of flowering native shrubs along one side, and the bat had come to feed on the nectar. She decided to remove these shrubs, and plant ground-cover natives. The top strand of barbed wire was replaced with plain wire.

what you can do

- Make your fences wildlife friendly.
- Monitor barbed wire fences in your area and encourage landholders to go wildlife friendly.
- Encourage the promotion of wildlife friendly fencing by natural resource management groups, Councils, fencing contractors and suppliers.
- Help distribute the WFF brochure.
- Visit www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com for advice and information. While online, shop for WFF t-shirts and car stickers.

Report entangled animals to your local wildlife rescue organisation. You can find them at www.fauna.org.au. Rescue is best left to experienced carers with the skills to minimise further harm, and who can take the animal into care for assessment and rehabilitation. Please do not attempt to handle flying foxes.



wildlife friendly fencing gives them a fighting chance

Thousands of animals face a cruel death every year on barbed wire fences.

