

# Hunter Local Land Services Wildlife Friendly Fencing



Photos: H.Evans, G.Howard, L.Wilson  
WildlifeFriendlyFencing.com

## **Fencing is important for effective stock control, but barbed wire near fauna corridors can be problematic for wildlife.**

Over 60 bird and mammal species have been recorded entangled in barbed wire fences across Australia, including the Grey Headed Flying Fox and Sugar Glider (pictured above).

A significant number of bird, bat and glider species are at risk of such encounters in the Hunter Local Land Services region.

Encounters between wildlife and barbed wire fences, and other fencing such as netted fencing can injure or harm native animals.

## **Where is the problem more likely to occur?**

Higher entanglement rates usually occur along forested wildlife corridors and in refuges such as creeklines, areas between paddock trees, patches of native vegetation and wetlands.

Fences near food sources, and den or nesting trees can also be harmful, when moving between them.

Barbed wire in areas such as open paddocks or roadways are unlikely to cause the same level of risk for wildlife.



**Local Land  
Services**

[www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter)



## Understanding native fauna and why they get entangled

Many of our native wildlife, such as gliders, tend to move around to feed using the shortest possible distance between trees, placing them at greater risk when crossing between trees at the corner of paddocks (see diagram 1). Gliders and bats also make extensive use of single paddock trees.

And so, barbed wire on fences between single paddock trees and patches of native vegetation are more likely to be the ones that are the greatest risk to our local native wildlife (see diagram 2).

Entanglement usually occurs more often in nocturnal species such as **gliders, bats, microbats, frogmouth owls, wallabies, kangaroos, large winged birds, and even koala.**

While nocturnal species can 'see' well at night, the wire on fences may not be obvious as they blend into the night. Wildlife may travel along regular routes, and often newly installed fences can 'surprise' animals such as gliders if the fence has been installed in a thoroughfare (e.g. a glide path from a den or food tree).

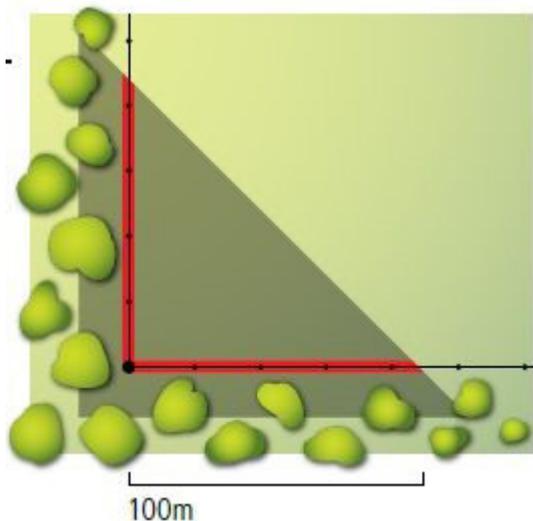


Diagram 1 - the likely movement path of gliders (shaded area) between trees, across a paddock. Barbed wire in the shaded area presents a hazard for gliders

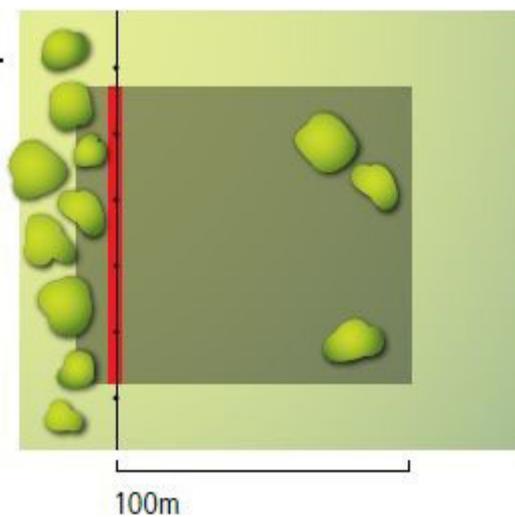


Diagram 2 - The likely movement path of gliders (shaded area) between single paddock trees and native vegetation. Barbed wire in the shaded area presents a hazard for gliders and bats



The key is ensuring that the fencing is visible to nocturnal fauna!

## Keys to wildlife friendly fencing

For wildlife friendly fencing, you need to ensure the fence is visible for fauna and reduces the likelihood for entanglement. To make existing barb wire visible for nocturnal animals you can use tags, electric tape, flagging tape or poly-pipe.

A cheap option to retro-fit is to assess areas of fauna movement, and simply replace barb with plain wire (for livestock) or sighter wire (for horses), on at least the top 2 strands and bottom strand.

For new fencing, you can assess the area and then decide the design, type and placement that is right for the location and for you!

## Alternatives to barbed wire where fencing adjoins fauna corridors or forested areas.

There are many alternatives to barbed wire for new fences.

- Stock-proof fences can also be constructed from multi-strand high-tensile plain wire.
- Electrified fences are another alternative, but they must be designed to ensure that stock control is effective and wildlife protection is considered.
- Virtual fencing is another option, depending on your cashflow.

Where barbed wire must be used, where practical, try to avoid using it on at least the top 2 strands.



Top photos Polypipe splitter and applicator tool used to install 25 mm polypipe onto barbed wire fencing. Photo Desiree Marshall, Bottom left: Wildlife Friendly fencing with top 2 strands and bottom 2 strands plain wire, with middle barbed wire. Bottom right: Old electric fencing tape(or flags/tags) can be strapped to top wires to make the wire more visible

## Short-term solutions-covering the top strand with poly pipe or tags.

As a temporary measure in some areas, barbed wire can be concealed on short sections of fence. A special tool to split and install polypipe is shown above.

Poly pipe is effective in the short term for small sections of fence. However, it may be cheaper to remove and replace barbed wire with plain wire. Another alternative is to make the fence more obvious to wildlife by installing metal tags along the top wire(or old electric fencing). Tags should be installed at a minimum of 30 cm intervals to ensure maximum visibility.



It is distressing to see wildlife impacted by fencing.

Help make your fence wildlife friendly.



### Protecting threatened species

Unfortunately, for some species, barbed wire is recognised as a threatening process. Wildlife that are at high risk include:

- Yellow-bellied glider (*Petaurus australis*)
- Mahogany glider (*Petaurus gracilis*)
- Spectacled flying fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus*)
- Grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalis*).



### What to do if you find wildlife on your barbed fence?

If you find an animal entangled, there is still a chance to rescue it. However longer they are on the wire, the worse chance they have. For all rescues you will need to act quickly, and have study gloves, pliers/small scissors on hand, and a towel or cloth to carefully hold the animal still.

Careful covering of the animals eyes/head (with a cloth or towel) wil calm it down also.

You may need to cut the whole barbed section, and then remove the animal from the barb carefully (in a location easier to work in). If you have successfully disentangled an animal, it may be dehydrated and in shock.

Place the animal in a box with a (breathable) cover in a quiet and cool place, leave a shallow dish with water in the box (do not force-feed animals water- you can drown them). Contact a local wildlife carer/ vet immediately.

**More informaton on wildlife friendly fencing, and a range of options can be found at:**

[www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com](http://www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com)

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