

Fencing Guide



Neerim District
Landcare

P O Box 68
NEERIM SOUTH VIC 3831

A GUIDE FOR FENCING

A well constructed, appropriately set back and aligned fence is essential for the long-term protection of your land and waterway from adverse impacts. It will also decrease the effort and cost associated with fence maintenance and renewal.

Wider vegetation buffers assist in the overall health of the soil and water by reducing erosion, nutrient and sediment runoff.

Things to consider when fencing your project area

1. Have your project area as wide as possible. Vegetation stabilises the soil:

- Wide bands of vegetation improve the effectiveness of the plants in providing soil stability and waterway buffering. Narrow bands of vegetation are less able to withstand flood and high flows of water and are more susceptible to wind-throw as the plants mature.
- Narrow bands of vegetation are also less effective at protecting against erosion as their capacity to bind soil and lower the water table is reduced.
- If too narrow the area reserved within the fence may not provide effective buffering against the impacts of surface run-off from adjacent land e.g. fertiliser, manure or sediment.
- If too narrow there may be limited opportunity to establish a vegetation buffer through revegetation or natural seedling recruitment.
- The fence alignment should allow enough room for a minimum of 5-7 rows of tree, shrubs and native grasses.

2. Incorporate as much remnant vegetation as possible:

- Particularly where remnant vegetation extends beyond 10m from the project site. Remnant vegetation helps improve soil and water health by providing food sources, a range of habitat types and wildlife refuge thus increasing overall biodiversity.
- Remnants also improve the function of the project area as a wildlife corridor whilst still providing shade into paddock areas.

3. Avoid placing the fence within or along the drip line:

- If there is just a single row of remnant trees along your project area, place the fence far enough beyond the edge of their canopy to allow room for supplementary planting or natural regeneration.
- Placing the fence away from the trees will also reduce the chance of damage from limb-drop.

4. Keep the fence parallel to the waterway:

- If placing a fence on a waterway, avoid placing perpendicular to water flow as they are more susceptible to damage during floods and water-born debris.
- If your waterway has large meanders, keep your fence parallel to the flow by fencing straight across the meander neck rather than following the waterway channel. This will create larger vegetated areas, lower construction and maintenance costs (straight fences are cheaper and stronger) and improve stock management.

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5. If your fence is likely to be subjected to erosion or floods, make sure it is strongly constructed:

- Use thicker, longer posts and secure them deeper in the ground. Lower fences are more stable than tall fences. Where soil conditions allow, drive the posts into the ground rather than digging a hole and backfilling. Reduce the spacing between your posts but use fewer droppers or fencing materials that collect debris, e.g. barbed wire and mesh. Construct end assemblies for strength.
- If flooding is likely to be frequent consider electric fencing, building isolated fences (free-standing from your other fences) or drop down fences.

6. Include access gates:

- Allow for gates on both sides of your fenced off area to allow entry for maintenance (weed control) and the removal of stray stock.

7. Stock concentration points, such as paddock gates and off-stream stock water points, should be located at a distance from the fence:

- This decreases the impact on the buffer of elevated sediment and nutrient runoff associated with the concentration points.

8. Use quality materials and reputable fencing contractors:

- To save money on replacement.
- Contractors that understand the fencing requirements for conservation purposes. Your local Landcare group may be able to provide information about reputable local fencing contractors.

Basic Fencing Design Variations

A range of appropriate styles exist for both permanent standard fences and permanent electric fencing. There is a degree of flexibility in fence design and construction. A minimum of 5 wires is desirable but this will depend on your stock requirements and preferred fencing types and materials. Landholders are encouraged to consider using plain wire instead of barbed wire when combining with electric fencing.

For further information on fencing designs or the fencing guidelines please contact NDLG's Project Officer (Sandra McPhee) on 0407 826 649 or email: sandra@ndlg.org.au.