

Fencing For the Future

BUILDING BIODIVERSITY
ON FARMS



Photo credit: Brendan Kinsella



Designed by Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee

Why Farmers Fence

A simple solution with
lasting benefits

Jon Marwick with newly
constructed fence at
Walitj Farm, Redmond

“Since the fence has gone in, the bush is slowly starting to become more diverse.”

Jon Marwick, Southern Aboriginal Ranger Coordinator



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“It’s a lot easier to run cattle when you can find them.”

Scott Wolfe,
Youngs Siding farmer

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“The changes have been dramatic... stock have access to clean drinking water. The trees are reducing waterlogging. Overall, the project has been a huge success both in the protection of the local environment and the increase of agricultural productivity. It is a great resource for our students to study best practice and carry this on into their future careers.”

Kevin Marshall, Farm Manager,
WA College of Agriculture Denmark



“My late wife Penny applied for some funding to cover the cost of materials and over a few years we fenced off about 20km of river frontage. She then collected seed and grew plants to revegetate the riverbanks. Some of the areas also self-seeded or revegetated from an existing seed bank. She would often visit the river to canoe and enjoy the flora and fauna in the existing and revegetated riverbanks.”

Mick Moir, Pallinup farmer

Benefits of fencing

Fencing remnant bushland, waterways and farm dams can have big benefits for on-farm biodiversity and productivity. Keeping livestock out of remnant vegetation maintains a healthy understorey, which in turn suppresses weeds.

More understorey and groundcover plants give greater protection from erosion and more shelter for livestock. Farmers also see more diverse frog, bird and insect populations which provide pollination and natural pest control.

✓ PROS	✗ CONS
 Native bushland can self-seed and be self sustaining	 Higher fuel load could increase fire risk – this can be managed with cool burns or strategic grazing where appropriate
 Healthy understorey makes a more effective windbreak, reduces evaporation and suppresses weeds	 Less shade for livestock – animals can still access shade from alongside, and shelter is improved by fencing
 Livestock can get shade and shelter alongside the fenced area, without damaging trees or understorey plants	 Some land lost to production – studies show production can increase even with less pasture area available
 Builds up on-farm biodiversity	 Cost or labour of building a fence may be prohibitive – subsidies are available
 Easier livestock management	

Many farmers carry out fencing programs independently. Local landcare groups have also been offering subsidies to assist farmers with the cost of additional fencing for many years. Currently, subsidies may be available under a range of funding programs to include protecting remnant native bushland or threatened ecological communities, or implement buffer zones along waterways or around farm dams.

Contact your friendly landcare group for more information and locally specific advice.

Planning your fences

It's common to plan fencing in a multi-year, staged approach. Consider fencing around dams, waterways and bushland areas to improve your farm's biodiversity, while creating easier livestock movements and improved grazing management.

Strategic fencing can also form larger connected patches of bushland across multiple farms, creating high value wildlife corridors. Planted shelter belts can increase the connections between patches, improving wildlife habitat.



- Fencing - at farmers cost
- Fencing - subsidy requested

“We had a property coming out of pines and it had some wildlife corridors in great condition. We only had the budget to fence one side of the corridor, so we applied for subsidy to finish the other side before the cattle were brought in”

Rebecca Blyth, Palmdale farmer

Fencing guidelines

When offering subsidies, we aim to keep fencing specifications flexible to suit your farming operation and livestock. To be eligible for subsidies, fences need to be permanent, free-standing and able to keep livestock out of fenced areas. Beyond that, the type of fence is up to you.



Do's



Consider wildlife (kangaroos, emus), how they might affect the fence, and design the fence appropriately



Build a fence that suits your farming operation & livestock



Build the fence in the agreed location (or let us know if you need to change the location)



Build the fence as a permanent, self-supporting structure



Prune branches if required



Maintain the fence as agreed in landholder agreement



If understorey is minimal, consider planting local native species to help the bush regenerate



Leave enough space between plantings and fence for easy access



Don'ts



Combine electric & barbed wire in the same fence, or connect electricity to barbed wire (it's an animal welfare risk)



Build a fence that doesn't keep livestock out



Move the fence location without letting us know



Attach the fence to trees



Clear trees or areas of bushland to build the fence



Consider the fence to be completely maintenance free



Plant weedy or invasive species or those that don't suit your farming operation or local area



Plant too close to the fence (trees at least 3m away, shrubs at least 1.5 m)



Fenced vs unfenced

LIVESTOCK EXCLUDED

The fenced area shows healthier vegetation and natural recovery



- Diverse, healthy understorey
- New plants self-seeding
- Dense windbreak
- Excellent wildlife habitat

LIVESTOCK ACCESSING

The unfenced area is in decline due to the impacts of livestock



- No new shrub or tree growth
- Sparse, minimal shelter for livestock and wildlife
- Grassy understorey

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“Without fencing our lagoons and waterways from the cattle, they would have gradually been destroyed over the years. By fencing the Sleeman River and our wetlands, we weren't just helping the Wilson Inlet environment—we also made managing our paddocks and cattle movement so much easier.

One of our favourite places is ‘Spooky Lagoon’, with its ancient paperbark trees and hidden beauty. For years we’ve camped there every Easter with family and friends, and it’s become part of our family history. We’re so glad we fenced it off, because now everyone can enjoy it, and we know it will still be there for future generations.”

Anna Wolfe, Youngs Siding farmer

Find out more...

Local landcare group contact details:

Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee: ag@wicc.org.au

Oyster Harbour Catchment Group: ohcg.org.au

Torbay Catchment Group: info@torbaycatchment.org.au



**Farms with higher biodiversity
are more profitable and
financially sustainable (MLA)**

Scan to learn more 



**Remnant vegetation on
farms is a valuable
resource (DPIRD)**

Scan to learn more 



**Fencing and revegetating
on-farm waterways
improves water quality and
biodiversity (WA government)**

Scan to learn more 



**Healthy, fenced farm dams
have improved water quality
for livestock, more wildlife and
reduced greenhouse gas
emissions (ANU Sustainable Farms)**

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**Design tips for wildlife-
friendly fencing
(NSW government)**

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Australian Government



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