

Wildlife friendly netting

Flying foxes (commonly known as fruit bats) and birds are effective pollinators. During Spring and Summer, you may notice increased bird and bat activity as they flock to flowering and fruiting trees.

Permanent netting is a reliable way to protect horticultural crops and urban fruit trees from damage by wildlife. It also provides a measure of protection from sunburn, wind and hail damage. There are a range of netting options available to protect crops from wildlife. Unfortunately, inappropriate netting (or the way it is erected) can entangle birds, flying foxes, possums, kangaroos, snakes and lizards; causing stress, injury or death.

Fortunately, it is possible to protect both the crop and wildlife by following these simple principles when purchasing and erecting netting. These principles may need to be balanced with aesthetic, productivity, weight and cost considerations.



Light (colour)

Where possible, choose roof and side nets that are as light in colour as possible to increase their visibility and reduce bird and mammal strikes. White netting is recommended where possible to make it easier for nocturnal animals to see and avoid at night.

Strong

Choose a thick, strong net(s) that does not stretch and enable animals to become entangled:

- ideally a knitted or woven mesh net made from thick strands (a minimum of 500 microns thick) of high-density polyethylene monofilament with woven selvedge edges that give extra strength and ensure the net will not unravel. Such nets also have the advantage of being highly durable.
- avoid thin, lightweight nets (e.g. extruded) as they are easy for animals to pull out of shape and become entangled. They are also not very durable.

Mesh size of less than 5mm

We recommend where possible for netting to have a mesh size of 5mm x 5mm or less at full stretch.

For example, netting that you cannot poke your finger through.

Choosing netting with as small a mesh size as practicable prevents access to small animals and entanglement of the wings or feet of larger animals.

Tautness

The net(s), including the base, should be taut enough that it does not sink under the weight of animals or form folds around them when they land or crawl over it.

Ensure any curtain 'doors' (i.e. made from a drop of net) are also taut, e.g. by weighing them down with a pipe weight.

The bounce test – ideally animals should almost 'bounce' off the netting, rather than sink into it, when they land on it.

Secure

- ensure the net(s) is designed to withstand extreme weather events.
- ensure panels are securely clipped or sewn together.
- ensure any 'doors' are gap-free (see Tautness).
- fix any holes in the net(s) promptly.

Check nets regularly

Preferably twice daily during the fruiting season for trapped or entangled wildlife, or holes in the net.

Risks of entanglement

As they struggle to escape, entangled wildlife can become stressed, break bones and tear wing membranes. Thin monofilament line can cut into animals; causing deep wounds or stop circulation. Ultimately, these injuries can lead to shock and even death, particularly if the animal is trapped for a long time.

Entangled flying foxes may also be mothers nursing young that are waiting at a nursery roost. If these mothers cannot return to the roost within a day, these young will starve.

Wildlife friendly netting options



If wildlife becomes trapped or entangled

If you find a sick or injured wildlife, contact a wildlife rescue organisation or Bat Rescue SA (for bats and flying foxes). These groups have volunteer carers who are vaccinated and permitted and trained to rescue them.

It is very important to store or dispose of netting properly, so that it doesn't become a further hazard to wildlife and doesn't end up in the environment as litter.

If the chosen method is disposal to landfill it is recommended that you place old netting into a bag.

Trapped but uninjured wildlife

- release as soon as discovered in a safe manner. Open the door of the net, move away to a safe distance and allow the animal to leave before closing.

Entangled and/or injured wildlife

- DO NOT attempt to release entangled and/or injured flying foxes or bats of any kind, and DO NOT handle dead flying foxes or bats due to the risk of infection by Australian Bat Lyssavirus, which can be transmitted by a bite or scratch from an infected animal. Call an appropriate rescue group.
- entangled animals and/or injured animals are likely to be highly stressed and potentially dangerous so if not confident do not attempt to remove wildlife from the net – minimise disturbance and contact a licensed wildlife rescue group trained to handle and care for wildlife.
- DO NOT attempt to release entangled and/or injured snakes. Call a licenced snake catcher.

Destruction permit

Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPW Act) a Permit to Destroy Wildlife (PDW) may be granted to allow for the destruction or removal of wildlife that are causing damage to the environment, crops, stock or other property (including to nets). However, we may not issue PDW's for certain species. Please refer to DEW's [Living with wildlife](#) page for more information.

The destruction of any animal must comply with codes of practice and animal welfare standards outlined in the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (AW Act) and the regulations under that Act.

Environmental law

It is an offence to catch, interfere with, harass or kill protected wildlife under the NPW Act. The ill treatment of animals, which includes death or serious harm, is an offence under the AW Act.

More information

Visit: www.environment.sa.gov.au

Email: Wildlife@sa.gov.au

Wildlife rescue organisation or Bat Rescue SA

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