

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY PERMANENT HORTICULTURAL NETTING

For commercial and non-commercial horticulture

Protecting crops & wildlife

Permanent netting is a reliable way to protect horticultural crops 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, some 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)

Choose roof and side nets that are as light in colour as possible to increase their visibility and reduce bird and mammal strikes (acknowledging that if you are seeking exemption from development plan consent¹ the side netting needs to be of a dark colour). Ideally, choose a net lighter in colour than the background foliage so birds and mammals can see and avoid it.

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 selvedged 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.

Small (mesh size)

Choose a net(s) with as small a mesh size as practicable to prevent access by small animals and entanglement of larger animals' wings or feet.

Taut

The net(s), including the base, should be taut enough that it does not sink under the weight of animals or form folds around them² 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 Taut).
- fix any holes in the net(s) promptly.

¹ Under Schedule 1A of the *Development Regulations 2008*

² common brush tail possums can weigh up to 3.5 kg, common ringtails 1.1 kg, and grey-headed flying foxes up to 1 kg

Check regularly - 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.

If wildlife becomes trapped or entangled (including during erection of nets):

Trapped but uninjured wildlife

- release as soon as discovered

Entangled and/or injured wildlife

- entangled animals and/or injured animals are likely to be highly stressed and potentially dangerous so DO NOT attempt to remove them from the net - cover them with a towel and contact a licensed wildlife rescuer group (e.g. Fauna Rescue SA) trained to handle and care for wildlife.
- DO NOT attempt to rescue 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 the Fauna Rescue SA Microbats & Flying Foxes Rescue hotline.
- DO NOT attempt to rescue entangled and/or injured snakes. Call a licenced snake catcher.

Destruction Permit

Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, a Permit to Destroy Wildlife 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).

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

For more information

Animal Welfare Act; National Parks and Wildlife Act:
<https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/browseActs.aspx>

Qld Government (2008) To net or not to net, 3rd edition:
https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/72954/Orchard-Netting-Report.pdf

Grey-headed Flying-foxes in South Australia:
<http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidentloftyranges/plants-and-animals/native-plants-animals-and-biodiversity/native-animals/mammals/grey-headed-flying-fox/grey-headed-flying-foxes-south-aust>

Fauna Rescue of South Australia Inc.:
<http://www.faunarescue.org.au/home.htm>