

Why It Matters

Fences can cause serious injuries and even death for wildlife. Installing wildlife friendly fencing can help prevent these incidents and keep wildlife safe.

Wildlife damage to your fencing is also costly and frustrating to fix. By tailoring fence design and placement, you can reduce wildlife injuries and decrease damage to your fences.

Avoid:

- Barbed and unmarked wires along the top of fences that can catch birds or hooves.
- Poly rope and woven-wire fencing or loose and broken wires that may catch and tangle an animal's legs or antlers.
- Blocking access to food and water sources.
- Fencing too close to the road, which can cause animals to walk into the road instead of next to it.

Instead Try:

- Hanging flags or durable vinyl markers on wires or using colored wires to increase visibility.
- Using smooth wires on the top and bottom that won't snag or impale wildlife. For further deterrence, consider an electric fence.
- Securing loose wires, maintaining proper tension, and replacing woven wire fencing with welded-wire to avoid entanglement.
- Keeping topography and animal movements in mind when designing fencelines.
- Removing obsolete and abandoned fencing.



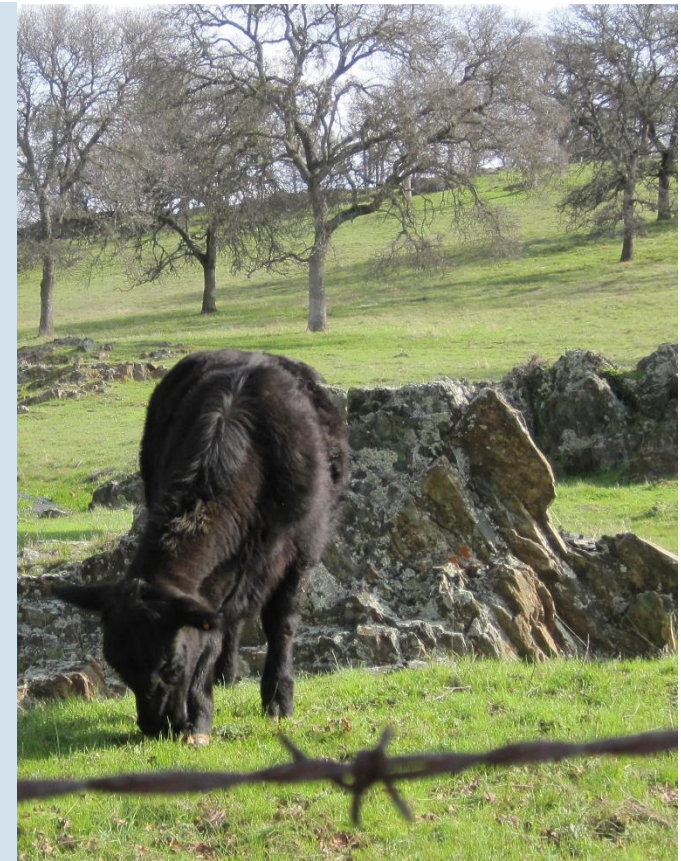
More Information and Resources

- El Dorado County Fish & Wildlife Commission:
<https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/County-Government/County-Departments/Fish-and-Wildlife>
- El Dorado County Fencing Ordinance:
https://library.municode.com/ca/el_dorado_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT130ZO_ART3SIPLPR_DEST_CH130.30GEDEST_S130.30.070FEWAREWA
- California Department of Fish & Game:
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/>
- Fencing With Wildlife in Mind:
<https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/LandWater/PrivateLandPrograms/FencingWithWildlifeInMind.pdf>
- The Dangers of Spiked Wrought Iron Fencing:
<https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/wrought-iron-spiked-fence-killing-deer/>
- Think Wild - Wildlife Friendly fencing
<https://www.thinkwildco.org/wildlife-friendly-fencing/#:~:text=Fencing%20can%20create%20a%20complete,and%20become%20impaled%20by%20barbs.>
- Turn your farm into a Wildlife Certified Habitat:
<https://www.nwf.org/CERTIFY>

Photo Credits:

Listed top to bottom and left to right.

- Front cover: EDC Dept of Agriculture
- Injured wildlife: On the Wing Photography, Tony Frates, Ben Robb
- Exclusionary fencing example: Christine Paige



Your Guide to Agricultural Wildlife Friendly Fencing



Contact us at
530-621-5520

or on the web at:

<https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/County-Government/County-Departments/Fish-and-Wildlife>



El Dorado County
Fish & Wildlife
Commission

Exclusionary Fencing For Crops And Gardens >>>

Below is an example of a good exclusionary fence.

It is made of welded-wire mesh with sturdy, evenly spaced fence posts. The wire is approximately 8 ft high, tall enough to deter deer from jumping it. The fence is also clearly visible to wildlife, so that birds do not accidentally collide with the wire. It has no loose strands of wire along the top, and no sharp edges to injure wildlife.

Fences like this are a good option to exclude deer from gardens, vineyards, and orchards. Exclusionary fences should be erected around as small an area as possible to allow free movement through the rest of the landscape.

A less expensive option is to install a shorter welded wire fence with strands of wire along the top to increase the height. This can be problematic because the wires along the top can catch and tangle leaping animals' feet and snag birds. If top wires must be used, they should be smooth, not barbed, tightly stretched, placed no less than 12" apart, and marked or colored to be clearly visible.



Making Your Fences Wildlife Friendly

Best Management Practices for farmers, ranchers, and gardeners in wildlife areas

What Causes Problems For Wildlife?

Fences that:

- Have loose or broken wires
- Have wires or bars spaced too closely together
- Can impale or snag a leaping animal
- Are difficult for running animals or birds to see
- Create a complete barrier to food and water
- Create a 3-dimensional obstacle - fences that are wide as well as tall, or two fences set close together
- Are too high to jump safely
- Are too low to crawl under

Tall fences can be a barrier to fawns and calves even if adults can jump them. If they cannot find another way under or around, the fawn will be stuck, separated from its mother, and easy prey for predators or starvation. Fences should be no more than 42", less if placed on a slope, for wildlife to clear safely.

Designing Your Fence

The best possible scenario for wildlife is open habitat with no fences at all. Whenever possible, remove obsolete fences that are no longer in need.

If you do need a fence, consider the specific purpose of your fence. Are you trying to keep wildlife out? Or to keep livestock in? Is the fence needed year round? Or only seasonally? Choose your fencing type and height to suit your purpose.

Ensure adequate setbacks from the road ROW (right of way) to keep animals out of roadways and ditches. The setback should be at least 5', more if on a steep slope.

The El Dorado County fencing ordinance sets limits on heights and styles of fences depending on location, topography, and purpose. Any fence over 7' in height requires a permit.

Barbed wire installation requires a Minor Use Permit. Contact the Planning Division at (530) 621-5355 to learn more.

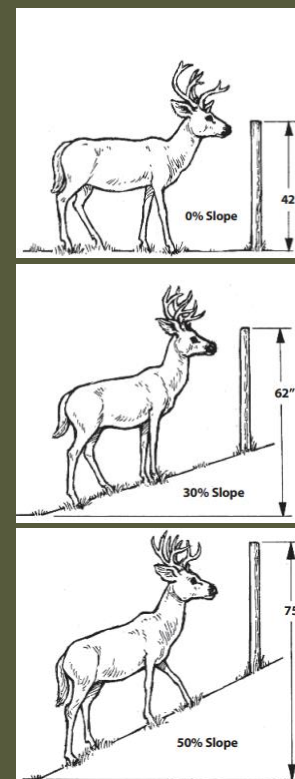
Topography And Fence Height >>>

Keep topography in mind when building fences. Steep slopes work against wildlife by making fences seem taller than they are. The recommended height of 42" for a passable fence quickly becomes impassable when combined with a steep slope.

If the slope becomes too steep for wildlife to cross the fence, consider adding a crossing along your fence. If the steep slope is along a roadside, make sure your fence is far enough away from the road to allow passage.

Finally, make sure the fence is visible to wildlife, and add markers if needed, to help wildlife accurately judge the height of the fence and avoid jumps that would cause injury.

Illustration by E.R. Jenne Illustration, Missoula, MT



Crossings and Passes

Build in crossings and passes for wildlife to reach key resources such as food and water, to cross roads, and to migrate along seasonal paths. Consider creating a wildlife corridor through your property.

Wire fences can be adapted by tying wires together to increase the space above and below them, or by building in removable sections, as seen in the illustration below. Rail fences can have the top rail removed at certain key sections near wildlife crossings.

Barbed Wire Fencing For Livestock >>>

To the right is an example of a fence with properly spaced wires.

Note that:

- The wires are spaced 10-12" apart, with the bottom wire 16" from the ground.
- The wires are tensioned properly. Not stretched tightly, but not sagging either.
- No loose or broken wires. All ends are neatly wrapped.
- The fence posts are set between 16' and 20' apart.

The section of fence in the illustration can also be laid down to allow easy passage of wildlife in certain seasons or when the pasture is empty. The smaller poles can be detached from the main posts so that this whole section lays flat while the rest of the fence remains intact.

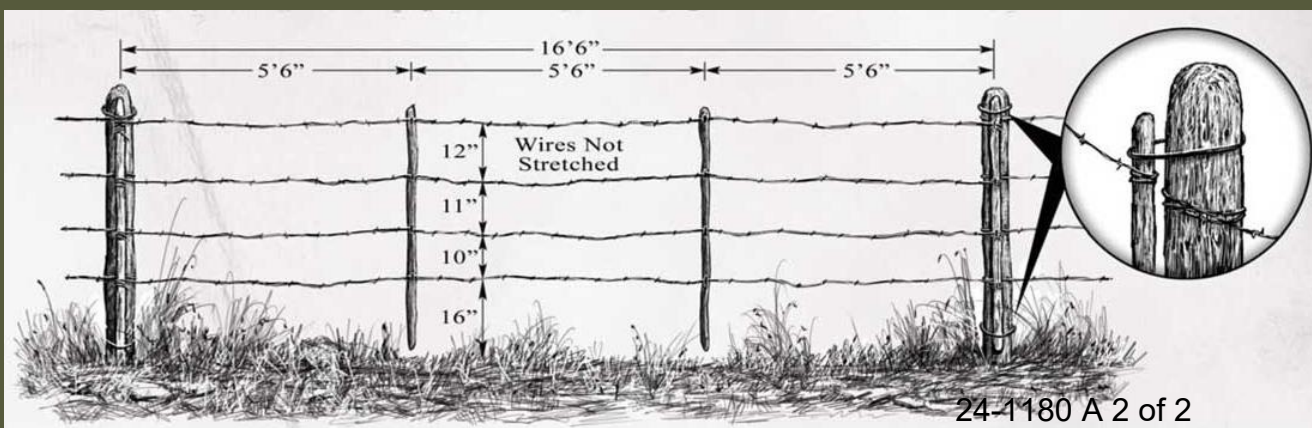


Illustration above by Bill Gamradt.