

A quick guide to: ANIMAL FRIENDLY FENCING



Types of fences are essentially determined by the species in a protected area, the materials available and the surrounding environment. Unfortunately, fences often also have negative effects on non-target species (e.g., small mammals and reptiles) and can lead to injury or death. Fencing is an important first step in the management of game animals. Additionally, fencing also helps maintain friendly relationships with neighbors by helping to prevent the escape of damage causing animals.



A fence in urgent need of maintenance after being washed away by a flood



A dangerous game fence (not wildlife friendly) with a combination of wire mesh and electrification

Mechanisms for wildlife friendly fences

- Swing gates for warthog, porcupine and small game.
- Old tyres can also be used to help animals move under fences.
- Open bottom (only starting wiring from 30cm+ above the ground).
- Low barrier walls can be effective in preventing mortality where electric wires are otherwise required to prevent digging.
- Fences should be designed around the wildlife they need to contain. For example, springbok or blesbok that do not jump will not need a fence higher than 1.4m and raised fences can be used for larger species like elephant and buffalo without impacting smaller herbivores.

Important principles and guidelines

- By constructing swing gates and thoroughfares for animals you decrease the likelihood of holes being dug under the fence.
- Fences with swing gates or tyres require less maintenance than fences where animals dig.
- In a wildlife and agricultural mosaic, rather fence important agricultural areas (rather than wildlife) and make the most of the area suitable for wildlife.
- Fences should be visible to animals to prevent unnecessary contact, using tins or flags can help with this.
- Electric fences pose a much higher risk to small mammals and reptiles.

The crux of dangerous game

Fences in big game reserves can often not be animal friendly and extra measures often have to be put in place to keep animals contained and protect surrounding communities. Fences for predators often require a combination of mesh, wire and electrification. Fences also need to be electrified close to the ground with offset wires to prevent burrowing. Warning signs of electric fences and dangerous game are also required at entry points and intervals along the fence.



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