

# FENCING

## INFORMATION LEAFLET

Waterfowl in general have wandering, inquisitive natures and are easy targets for the many predators and other hazards which abound in the wild. To be able to maintain and enjoy a collection, whatever its size, it is wise to plan to contain your birds in a secure enclosure at the outset. Your individual circumstances will govern the size and materials you wish to use but the information in this leaflet should guide you to the construction of an appropriate enclosure to protect your birds from the most common predators. It is advisable to visit some waterfowl breeders to look at their fencing before embarking on an extensive construction.

If you intend to let your birds wander the garden during the day and then to shut them in a shed at night, you may well use some existing boundary walls or panel fence. Where a new fence is needed you will find 3' 6" in height to be adequate for all but the tree duck species that may get enough lift on a windy day to escape. The drawback to this husbandry system is the need to shut up the birds before dark and never to miss an evening. The fox checks on you every night!

Foxes, badgers, cats and dogs are the most common creatures to try to scale a fence to get to confined waterfowl - the fox being the most persistent and destructive. Small predators, like rats, mink, squirrels, stoats and weasels, will often get in but can be dealt with by trapping.

There are three basic types of fox-proof fencing with many variations: (See diagrams.)

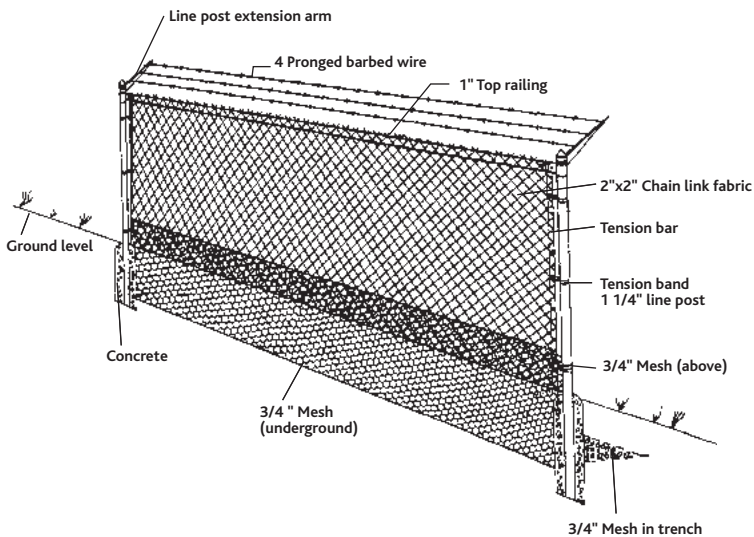
- A 6ft (80cm) wire fence with a 2ft (50cm) overhang facing outwards and 8" dug into the ground.
- A 6ft (80cm) wire fence with outside electric wires.
- A 6ft to 8ft (80cm to 240cm) fence with polythene overhead netting.

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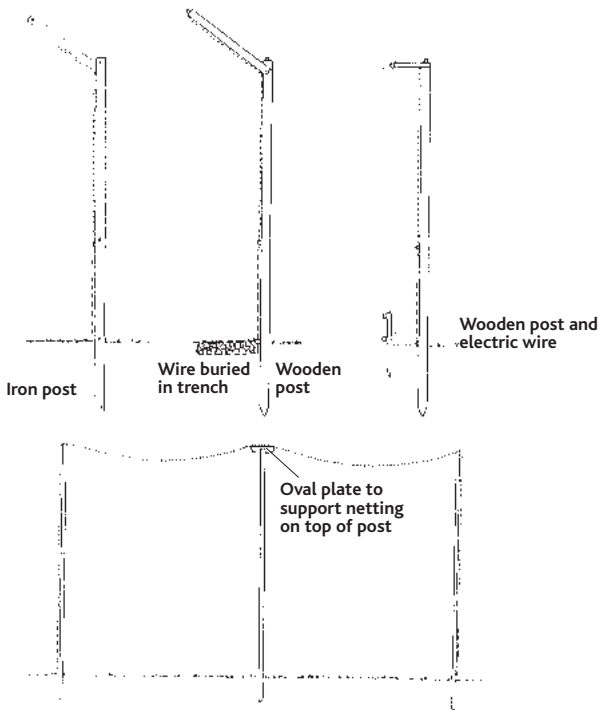


The best, and in the long run by far the cheapest, exterior protection in terms of years of service is regular 6ft heavy gauge 2in chain link fence. The supporting posts can be wood, metal or less attractive, but more durable, concrete. It is advisable to dig in at least 18" of extra wire to prevent foxes or badgers digging under your fence. If it is not possible to dig down, the wire can be laid on the ground near the surface and covered with soil or turf. A 3/4 inch mesh can be used here and then carried up the fence for another 2ft. to prevent young ducklings escaping through the 2" chain link or adult birds from poking their heads through. Barbed wire and



wire mesh are equally effective materials for the overhang. If using mesh, it should deliberately be left floppy as this is more difficult for foxes to scale. It is advisable to have a wood or concrete sill between any gateposts to deter predators from digging through at this vulnerable point.

A less robust fence, but with the addition of electrified wires at strategic points outside, is another very successful method of deterring predators. Stranded galvanized wire is passed through commercially available insulators and fixed about 9" from the fence at three levels: 9", 18" and near the top. The wire is activated through an energizer, powered either by a battery, sited near the fence, or from the mains supply. When a fox or other predator approaches the fence it is drawn to sniff the wire and receive a nasty shock. A wet nose and four feet on the ground work as a good earth! Should the fox try to climb the fence it will still have two more wires to surprise it. The adage '**once bitten twice shy**' certainly seems to apply here. It also seems best not to try to remove 'your' fox from the area because, if you do, the new visitor will have to go through the process again and it might just be the night the power is off! Any



battery, usually a car or similar size battery, will need charging at monthly intervals. Small testers are also available which will show the charge being sent out and indicating its power.

It is important to check the fence daily to ensure there are no branches, long grass or other obstacles that might be shorting the circuit. A small light can be linked to the wire at an easily visible point, which will flash with each pulse of the fence. This gives an easy night-time reminder that your fence is working. There are special adaptors to fit gates so you do not need to perform a contortion act to get into the pen. Many agricultural suppliers will carry stocks of all you will require to electrify your fence.

Newly erected galvanized wire mesh looks very shiny and unsightly. A coat of black bitumen water-tank paint, applied with a roller to both sides of the fence before any grass grows up, will greatly extend the life of the wire and make it almost invisible to the eye. However, this is a messy job and best undertaken wearing a disposable boiler suit and a pair of goggles.

Good fencing is costly but, compared with the loss of valuable birds or savings in upkeep, it is money well spent. It also brings peace of mind.

*Compiled with help from John Lovatt.*

## O T H E R I N F O R M A T I O N

This leaflet is only a brief introduction and the successful husbandry of all livestock depends on being well informed about them. The BWA Bookshop sells a number of specialist publications which cover all aspects of keeping both Wildfowl and Domestic Waterfowl. All new keepers are strongly advised to obtain a book appropriate to their interest.

Leaflets in this series available from the BWA Secretary price 25p each.

**Starting to keep Wildfowl**

**Keeping Wildfowl - Geese**

**Keeping Wildfowl - Perching Ducks**

**Keeping Wildfowl - Whistling Ducks**

**Starting to keep Domestic Ducks**

**Starting to keep Domestic Geese**

**Breeds of Domestic Duck**

**Starting to Show Domestic Waterfowl**

**Pond Construction**

**Ailments and Remedies**

**Plants for Ponds and Pens**

**Incubation of Waterfowl Eggs**

Illustrations by M. Roberts



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