



## **The importance of wombats.**

Now more than ever digging mammals are needed, but sadly many may now be lost to large parts of the Australian landscape. Their digging provides a critical role for Australian ecosystems by turning over soil, increasing nutrients from falling leaves and other plants, fungi and animal faeces and creating avenues for water absorption.

We need to allow them to move freely through their home territory. Wombats may eat some pasture grasses, but do little, if any economic damage to pasture, crops, or plantations. Unfortunately, they are often blamed for the damage done by other browsing animals.

**There is a solution,** Dr. Phil Borchard and CSIRO researchers have found installing wombat gates, can reduce fence damage and most importantly wombats will use them.

Wombats use the same trails to get to and from their preferred feeding and drinking areas. Instead of going around an obstacle, such as a fence, a determined wombat will try to go through, or under it, sometimes creating problems such as letting dogs out or other unwanted animals in. The installation of ‘wombat swing gates’ at known wombat breach points along a fence will allow them to pass through without causing damage and the fence will continue to exclude other unwanted animals. Echidnas have also been shown to use wombat gates.

The Wombat Protection Society of Australia will be trialing wombat gates in Victoria in 2022. Initially, gates will be available at no cost to eligible landowners on the condition they are prepared to give feedback on the success of the gates. This will enable improvements to be made if necessary. It will be the landowner’s responsibility to install the gates which have been designed to fit into most existing ring lock /exclusion fencing. The trial has been made possible with the support of the Victorian Government through a “Community Support Fund” grant.

If this is something you would like to be part of contact us on [info@wombatprotection.org.au](mailto:info@wombatprotection.org.au)

Or see ‘Wombat Gate Trial’ on this Page.

## **Learning about their behaviour**

It is important to understand wombats so we can deal with the damage they sometimes cause. Affectionally known as ‘bulldozers of the bush’ they are extremely strong and determined animals and may sometimes build their burrows under houses, along driveways or along domestic stock routes. This may cause some inconvenience and conflict between wombats and people. Wombats construct burrows to escape the heat and hide from predators. They prefer areas where it is easy for them to dig. Depending on the location wombats will use existing burrows in preference to digging a new one. This is worth remembering as destruction of existing burrows or/and of local wombats is the primary cause of new burrow digging.



## Management Options

Many of the problems caused by wombats can be resolved with some patience and innovation. Problems may include injuries such as sprains to stock when they inadvertently step into a burrow or farm machinery being damaged when it crushes a wombat hole. Wombats can also cause concern when they take up residence under buildings.

**There are solutions to all such problems and concerns that have been demonstrated to work.**

- Marking the position of burrows with a star picket capped for easy recognition. This will make it easy for vehicles to avoid crushing burrows.
- Old pallets can be used to mark burrows and stop stock from getting too close.
- A small post and wire fence is a good deterrent to keep stock away. Alternately, electric fencing may be the answer. A recognised design is a two-wire electric fence, with the live wires at 15 and 30cm above the ground, or a single standoff wire if an existing fence is in place. Care needs to be taken in areas where echidnas live as they have been known to get quills caught in electric fencing.
- It is possible to exclude wombats from continuing to use a burrow under a building by erecting a simple one-way sturdy door that allows the animal to leave, but not to return. This can also be used when evicting a wombat from a hole in a dam wall. It can be as simple as a sheet of weld mesh wire with a section cut out and an overlapping section inserted allowing the wombat to push out, but not push back in. This and other solutions can be found [www.wombatprotection.org.au/education](http://www.wombatprotection.org.au/education) “*What to do if you have a wombat under your house*”
- Wombats do not like digging on top of wire. Normal fence netting staked under gates or in areas where wombats are digging rapidly solves the problem.

## Relocating or harming wombats

Bare-nosed wombats are now protected in all States. The trapping and relocation of wombats is not permitted. Wombats are territorial animals and if relocated, they are likely to be harassed or even killed by resident wombats or killed on the road or attacked by dogs as they try to find their way home.

Our wombats have been misunderstood and not appreciated for the important role they play in the Australian ecology. With ongoing extreme weather conditions like the recent devastating bushfires and other extreme weather conditions means our wombats are needed more than ever. Installing a wombat gate on your property could be the answer.

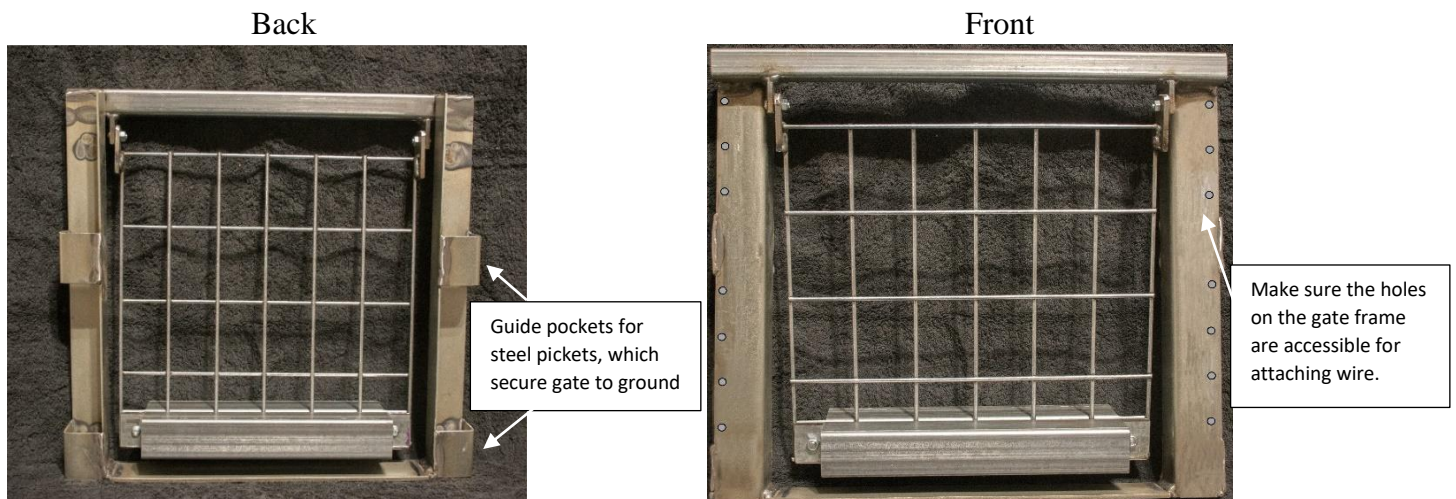
## HOW TO INSTALL A WOMBAT GATE

**Wombat Gates are available and are easy to install.**

The installation of ‘wombat gates’ can be a long-term solution to continued fence damage. Research shows wombats are willing to walk a few hundred metres to access a gate. They will of course need time to become accustomed to this new means of accessing their preferred route.

*Firstly, for a gate to be successful it needs to be installed after damage has been done to the fence. This is the only way to know the wombats preferred route.*

Depending on the size of your property will decide the number of gates you may need. If you have a number of holes in the fence, check to see which ones are being used the most as these will be the ones to set up a gate on (don’t put the gate up yet). Firstly, repair any other holes within a few hundred meters. You will need to check and mend these old holes for a while to ensure the chosen holes are being used. It usually only takes 3 – 4 weeks for the wombat to start using only the selected holes. The gate can then be fitted into these preferred holes (see details below). It is a good idea to tie the gates open for a couple of weeks to allow the wombats to become accustomed to them.



To start, you will need to cut the fencing wire to a size that will accommodate the gate leaving enough strands of wire to enable it to attach to the gate frame. Make sure you don’t make the opening too large. The gate can then be positioned, placing the T pickets in the pockets provided making sure the holes on the gate frame are accessible for attaching the wire. Pickets can then be hammered into the ground. Next the top of the gate can be wired to the fence using existing fencing wire. Make sure the gate is taut.

Ongoing maintenance of the gate is recommended to ensure it remains functional.

If you need further advice re installation, send a photo of your installation query to [info@wombatprotection.org.au](mailto:info@wombatprotection.org.au) and one of our gate advisors will assist.

**WPSA acknowledge and thank Berwick ‘Men’s Shed’ Vic. for the design and manufacture of the wombat gate.**

**This project is supported through the Victorian Government Community Support Fund.**

[www.dtf.vic.gov.au/funds-programs-and-policies/community-support-fund](http://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/funds-programs-and-policies/community-support-fund)