

Wombat Burrows

The incorrect belief that wombats are like rodents or moles leads to the equally incorrect assumption that wombats will undermine all farmland. Wombat burrows are built and used by successive generations of wombats and the suitability and availability of burrows may have an impact on breeding numbers. Destruction of long-standing burrows actually increases local burrow building activity as a number of wombats may use a particular burrow which, if destroyed, may lead to a number of wombats digging two or three new burrows to compensate for the destruction of their 'safety point'. Burrows are spread throughout a wombat's grazing range so it can bolt to a burrow from anywhere within its range.

There is also a mistaken belief that wombats cause erosion due to their burrowing activity. Replanting overgrazed areas, such as gullies, near burrows negates the need to take further action as erosion issues cease to be a problem. Wombats will not disturb the plants and once these are established it will be difficult to see or find the burrows.

If the burrow is in a place where it cannot remain the most effective method of management is to wait until the wombat has moved to another burrow and then fill or block it in. The bare nosed wombats in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania use a number of burrows according to weather conditions so there will be times when they are not in residence. Placing sticks or a sheet of cardboard near the burrow entrance or using sand to check tracks will give an indication of whether the burrow is currently in use. Also using a one-way gate in front of the burrow or entry point will allow a wombat to leave but unable to return. It is not true that all burrows in use will have entrances cleared



of leaves and other debris; many a well used burrow requires the wombat to walk over piles of sticks, stones and fallen debris and while some wombats are fastidious and clear away everything from their burrow entries, others are happy to leave their entries littered. The absence of scats near burrow entrances are likewise not a good indication of burrow use as although scats are often found near active burrows some wombats travel significant distances from their burrows to make a toileting place.

Further concerns are injuries such as sprains to stock when they inadvertently step into a burrow. This can be solved with electric fencing which let the wombats in but keep the stock away. A further suggestion is to use old pallets to mark burrows and stop stock wandering on top of them.



www.wombatprotection.org.au
Email info@wombatprotection.org.au
Mail PO Box 6045 Quama NSW 2550
Phone 02 6493 8245
LOCAL CONTACT

Living with Wombats



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A common complaint against wombats is that they dig holes in fences and allow rabbits and wallabies in to eat the grass and crops. Wombats are creatures of habit and will use the same track that they have created on a daily basis. If a wombat finds an obstruction in the way of its path it will not go around it – it will remove it! This often results in damaged fences where the wombat digs under or even pushes through the fence. Wombats are incredibly determined animals and it doesn't matter how often you try to barricade their pathway they will not rest until they have made their way through again. If all else fails, a wombat is more than capable of climbing a one-metre fence and flopping over the other side. The best solution is to provide a wombat gate that can be installed in fence lines or in farm gates along their trails.



Wombat Gates & Barriers

The gate needs to be solid and strong so that other animals such as rabbits, foxes and wallabies (that don't have the strength of a wombat) can't get through it. A simple, cheap and easy-to-manufacture and install design that is made from items around the farm is to wire or bolt together star posts or a water-pipe welded at the top joint. Screw eyebolts into the top of some old hardwood that has been nailed together with scrap metal (to stabilise it) or use steel strapping over the water pipe – both act as a hinge. The weight should be about 3 kg to stop rabbits, foxes and wallabies, but you can nail on extra wood to increase the weight if needed.



Standoff electric fencing is also quite effective for wombats. Keep the lowest wire as close to the ground as possible at about 15 cm, but higher where echidnas may be caught.

Soft mesh such as shade mesh placed around difficult to fence areas like water tanks will usually deter a wombat digging. It may also deter a wombat from building a new burrow but is not effective as a deterrent to stop them entering an existing residential burrow.

