

Rural Fencing Modifications for Koala Movement

Photo: Colin Elphick/
NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's *Essential Conservation Fencing Guideline* provides guidance to land managers to enable safe wildlife passage across conservation agreement areas and across the landscape.

This fact sheet offers additional guidance for applicants to the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's Northern Inland Koala Conservation tender. It includes advice on how to design fencing suitable for koala movement across a conservation agreement area and the surrounding landscape.

Resource name: *Essential Conservation Fencing Guideline*
Q www.bct.nsw.gov.au

How fences impact koala movement

Simple modifications to rural fencing can greatly assist with safe koala movement and dispersal across agricultural landscapes.

Fencing requirements for stock containment are often not compatible with native wildlife passage including koalas.

Some fence designs can trap a koala and leave koalas vulnerable to attack by cattle and dogs, as well as restricting access to important food and shelter trees.

Generally, koalas, as well as other wildlife, travel through properties using the exact same path every

time. A fence across that path can cause problems for both the wildlife, and the fence.

You may find where these paths are on your property by observing local wildlife movement and watching where they cross your fence line.



A koala navigates wire boundary fencing.
Credit: Heather Preston/Land for Wildlife South East Queensland

How you can help koala move freely on your property

There are ways fencing can be designed, or modified, to allow for safe koala passage and keep stock contained.

- 1 | Leave trees with interconnecting branches on either side of the fence for koalas to climb up and over a fence. There is no specific distance from the fence that trees need to be located. Rather focus on ensuring an interconnecting tree canopy over the fence. This also allows for easy maintenance of the fence and supports koalas to move freely.



Connecting branches of trees situated either side of a property fence can help koalas to move more easily across a property.
Credit: Emily Rayner/NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust

- 2 | If you have existing mesh fencing, such as exclusion, ring lock, hinge lock, cyclone fencing or chicken wire fencing, install timber posts or logs of at least 125mm diameter either side of the fence at an angle of no more than 60 degrees to the ground. This will allow koalas to climb over an existing fence and jump down on the other side.

If existing exclusion, hinge joint or netting fences are present in, or adjacent to, Koala Habitat within the conservation area, structures to enable koala access are required at a minimum of 1 structure per 500 m of fencing. This will require the installation of either timber strainer posts, or Koala bridges or poles (see section 3), that will allow access from both sides of the fence.



Lean a timber post or log against an existing fence near a koala's natural path to support their free movement
Credit: www.mpkoalas.org.au

- 3 | Install a koala bridge. Place timber poles, of about 125mm diameter, either side of the fence, creating a bridge between the two poles with a shorter length of timber at the top. Ideally, the vertical poles should be placed about 300mm apart to allow koalas to more easily climb up and across.

This is a suitable option for tall exclusion fences and a number of bridges may need to be installed along the fence line.



Koala bridges used along a fence line provide opportunities for koalas to move across your property
Credit: Brendan Taylor/NSW Office of Environment and Heritage



Koala bridges located along a highway where a habitat area has been fenced off.
Credit: Paul Fitzpatrick/Myall Koala and Environment Group

- 4 | For barbed wire fences, replace any barbed fencing on the bottom strand with plain wire or remove any wires (barbed or round) less than 30cm above the ground. This will allow wildlife to go under the fence. If it is not possible to do this for the full length of the fence, remove the bottom strands at the point where wildlife commonly cross it.



Allow koalas to move under a fence, where possible, by removing or raising the height of the lowest wires to 30cm from the ground. This is especially useful where existing barbed wire fences need to be made wildlife friendly.
Credit: NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust