

Supporting guidance for Post and Rail Tree Guards

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Veteran and newly-planted individual parkland trees may be protected from damage by livestock or deer with individual guards made of post and rail fencing. The type of livestock likely to browse the trees will determine how high and how far away from the tree the fence will need to be. It also determines the number of rails that will be needed, their spacing, and whether additional protection is needed.

What needs to be done?

A square frame 1.5 metres in height, with sides two metres in length, with at least three rails and with the trees in individual 1.2 metre tall tree shelters will provide adequate protection for young trees against all livestock as well as deer, rabbit and hare.

The option guidance requires the rails to be at least 38x87 millimetres sawn timber (usually supplied in four metre lengths) and posts to be no more than 1.8 metres apart. Rails for the larger fences needed for cattle and horses will need to be 100x50 millimetres, and the posts 100 millimetres diameter or square. Posts for the smaller pens should be 75 to 100 millimetres.

On the wider guards, posts will be needed mid-way along the length of each side.

The table below shows the types of construction needed depending on the type of grazing animal. Generally square frames are easier to construct than triangular ones, and use less railing.

| | Guard | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| Animal | Number of sides | Minimum height to top rail (metres) | Length of each side (metres) | Total running length of fence (metres) | Minimum number of rails | Additional notes |
| Sheep | 3 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 2 | 6 | Use three rails with "Weldmesh" or net secured behind them |
| Goat | 3 | 1.8 | 1 | 5.5 | 3 | Vertical slats (75mm spacing) or wire mesh or net |
| Cattle | 4 | 1.2 | 2 | 9.6 | 6 | Rails 100mm deep with 100mm spacing |
| Horses & cattle | 4 | 1.8 | 2 | 14.4 | 6 | Rails 100mm deep with 100mm spacing |
| Horses & cattle | 4 | 1.2 | 3 | 14.4 | 3 | |
| Deer | 3 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 6.5 | 3 | Rails or vertical slats (75mm spacing) or individual 1.2m shelters |

Adapted from *Fencing, A Practical Conservation Handbook*, BTCV, Oxford 1984; ISBN 0 946752 04 4 page 110

Additional protection of young trees from rabbit, vole, hare and deer may be achieved using individual plastic shelters. There is support for these and further guidance is available in the [Vole, Rabbit or Hare Guards](#) capital item.

Further information

- [Protection of Trees from Mammal Damage](#)
- [Forest Fencing](#)