Wombat gates

Wombats probably comprise the biggest threat to effectiveness of wallaby proof fencing in Tasmania. They are creatures of habit and tend to use the same path, digging under a fence for access and creating an entrance for wallabies.

Where wombats are present, simply blocking a hole in the fence line is rarely a long-term solution as they tend to dig a new hole, next to or, at least near, the one that has just been blocked.

Numerous successive wombat holes blocked with rocks, Forestier Peninsula (Matt Dunbabin)

Night time photo of wombats using their hole under a wallaby proof fence, Mathinna

One possibility is to install 'wombat gates' in holes currently being used by wombats.

A wombat gate needs to be simple, sturdy and vertically swinging. It must be light enough to enable a wombat to push through easily but sufficiently heavy to deter most wallabies.

In a recent trial the most effective wombat gate design for Tasmanian conditions was found to be a top hung weldmesh gate 35 – 40 cm square with a bottom weight of at least 3 kg. Lighter gates did not stop wallabies and wombats did not use a solid gate they couldn't see through but simply dug a new hole beside it.

Wombat gate under fence mesh, Forestier Peninsula (Matt Dunbabin)

The gates must be placed where wombats have existing runways, rather than where it is convenient to place them. Therefore they must be put in place after the fence has been constructed and when the wombats have dug under it. Usually a gate has to be cut into a wallaby proof fence to allow it to be fitted at the correct height, however in light soils they are sometimes placed below the mesh as Matt Dunbabin has done on the Tasman Peninsula.
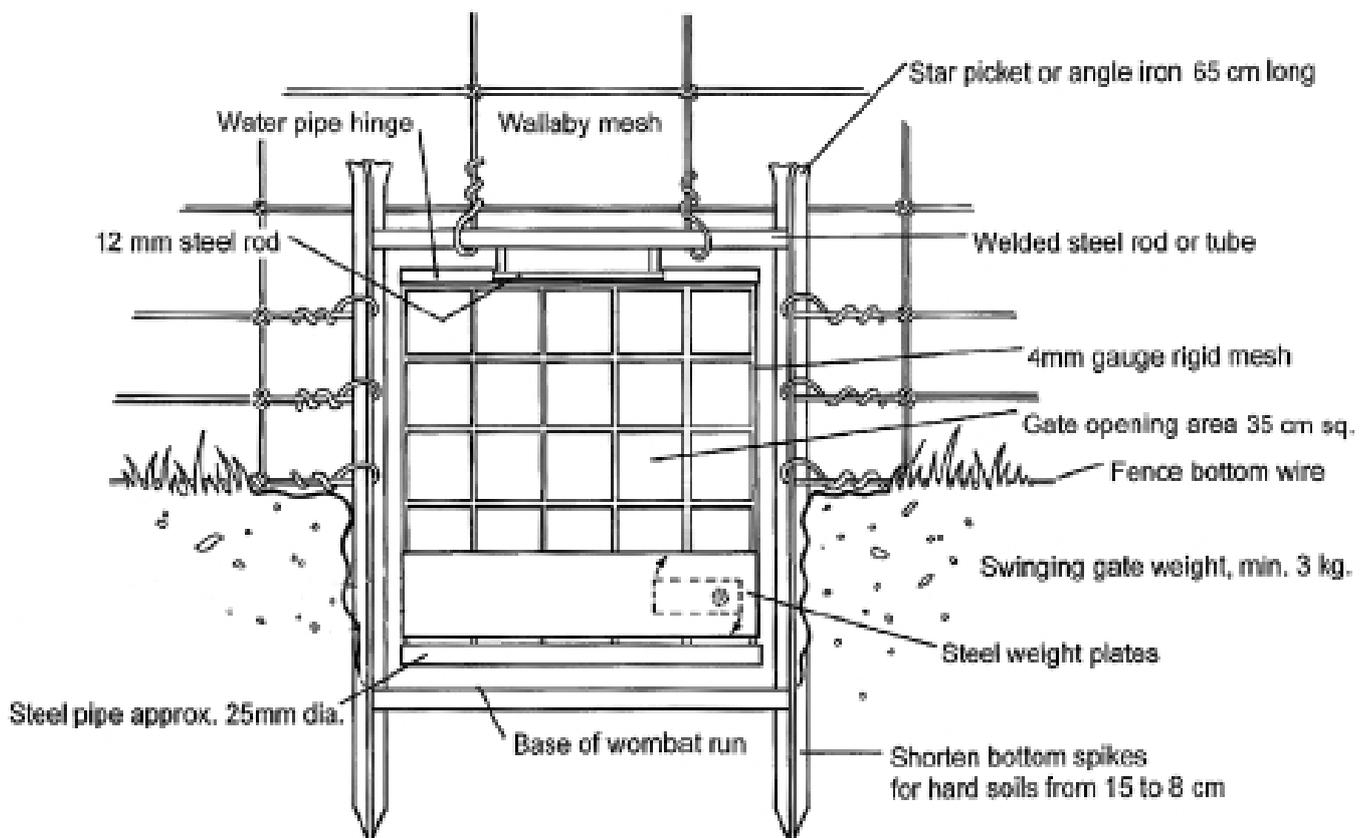
Wombat gates can be made in a frame or have steel star posts as the uprights, providing an integral frame and gate support.

Ongoing maintenance is necessary, particularly during winter, to ensure the gates are neither blocked from opening or stuck open.

**Effective wombat gate in fence, Mathinna
(Jim Davies)**

Star picket or angle iron 65 cm long

Water pipe hinge

Wallaby mesh

12 mm steel rod

Welded steel rod or tube

4mm gauge rigid mesh

Gate opening area 35 cm sq.

Fence bottom wire

Swinging gate weight, min. 3 kg.

Steel weight plates

Steel pipe approx. 25mm dia.

Base of wombat run

Shorten bottom spikes
for hard soils from 15 to 8 cm

Wombat gate design (drawing by B. Dolbey)