

# Toolbox Talks



## We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety MUST come first.



**emergencyplus**

Save the App that could save your life.

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

**In case of emergency, CALL 000 or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.**

**POISONS 13 11 26**  
Poisons Information Centre

## A Practical Guide

# Fencing

**Fence building and maintenance on a farm is a common and necessary task, but it can also be dangerous. Depending on the kind of fence being built or the type of repairs being performed fencing can expose people to a variety of hazards and risks.**

## The Hazards and Risks

**Chainsaws:** Chainsaws are powerful tools that can be very useful for fencing tasks, but they can also be very dangerous to the operator and those around them if not used properly. Chainsaws can cause serious cuts and lacerations, amputations, eye injuries, and head and neck injuries. These injuries can be fatal. There is also the danger of being struck or crushed by objects, or parts of objects being cut by the chainsaw.

**Chemicals:** Some fence materials, such as treated wood and herbicides, contain chemicals that can be harmful to human health. Other fencing materials may require painting to prevent rust or paint removal to allow welding. Chemicals can pose hazards to human health and the environment, such as poisoning, skin irritation, and respiratory problems.

**Electricity and Gas Lines:** The location of overhead and underground utilities like electricity and gas lines must be established before excavating, digging or driving posts. Striking one of these services has the potential to result in electrocution, fire, or explosion.

**Hot Work:** Welding, grinding, and steel cutting pose the risk of burns, exposure to fumes, lacerations, and potential ignition sources for bushfires.

**Manual Handling:** Fence posts and other materials can be very heavy, bulky, and hard to handle. Manual handling can result in a variety of injuries including muscle strains, sprains, and back injuries.

**Noise:** Noise hazards can be a problem when fencing, especially if you are using power tools such as chainsaws and grinders. Post drivers and items of plant can also be sources of hazardous noise on a fencing site. Exposure to loud noise can damage your hearing, and can also cause other health problems, such as tinnitus, stress, and fatigue.

**Plant and Equipment:** Fencing tasks usually require the use of items of plant like tractors, loaders, skidsteers etc. Each item

of plant will have its own particular hazards but the most common injuries while fencing are run over, rollover, and crush injuries. Another frequent injury relates to the use of hydraulics.

**Sharp Edges and Splinters:** Fence posts, wire, and other materials can have sharp edges and splinters. Cuts, lacerations, and injuries caused by embedded foreign objects are common when fencing.

**Slips Trips and Falls:** Slips, trips, and falls are a common cause of injuries on fencing sites. These injuries can range from minor to severe, and can include bruises and scrapes, strains and sprains, and broken bones.

**Tensioning Wires:** Tensioned wires have stored energy and over-tensioning can cause breakages, increasing the risk of snapback injuries.

**Tetanus:** Tetanus is caused by a bacteria called *Clostridium tetani* which can live in soil, dust or faeces. Abrasions from or contact with rusted wire and nails can increase the risk of that bacteria entering the body through any damage in the skin. Tetanus is a bacterial infection that affects the nerves in the brain and spinal cord, causing painful muscle spasms throughout the body. It can be fatal. Symptoms can include fever, cramped-up jaw, muscle spasms, headache, seizures, sweating, and trouble swallowing and begin to show up between 3 and 21 days following exposure.

**Weather:** It is important to be aware of the weather conditions when building a fence. Hot conditions can result in dehydration and heat stress, cold conditions can result in hypothermia. Excessive exposure to the sun can cause sunburn. Wet conditions increase the risk of many accidents including electrocution, slips, trips, and falls, and plant rollovers. Avoid fencing when electrical storms are anywhere in the area as electric shocks from lightning hitting conductive materials like fencing wire can be fatal many kilometres from the source of the strike.



**Wildlife:** Wildlife, such as snakes, centipedes, scorpions, and spiders, can be hazards when building a fence. Injuries to people may be bites, scratches, and stings. There is also the risk of catching a Zoonotic disease from a bite or scratch.

**Zoonotic Diseases:** Activities that disturb the soil and create dust, like digging post holes or clearing fence lines can expose people to Zoonotic Diseases. Animals such as bats can get caught in fencing wire and may bite or scratch a person trying to release them. Zoonotic disease can cause a range of symptoms from mild illnesses, to chronic disease, and even death. *See the Practical Guide to Zoonotic Diseases Toolbox Talk for more information.*

### Links and Resources

Working in Agriculture  
[safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

Before You Dig Australia  
[byda.com.au](http://byda.com.au)

## Reducing the Risk

### Chainsaws

- Training and awareness are key to safety when working with and around chainsaws. *See the Chainsaw Operation Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as a hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, and chainsaw chaps.
- Be aware of your surroundings and avoid operating a chainsaw near people or animals.
- Use a well-maintained chainsaw with a sharp chain.
- Plan the job to reduce the chance of anyone being struck or crushed by the objects being cut.

### Chemicals

- Training and awareness are key to safety when working with and around chemicals. *See the Safe Chemical Handling Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Wear appropriate PPE, such as gloves, goggles, and a respirator when handling chemicals.
- Follow the instructions on the chemical label carefully.
- Mix chemicals in a well-ventilated area.
- Dispose of chemicals properly.

### Electricity Overhead

- Training and awareness are key to safety when working with and around electricity. *See the Electrical Powerlines and Systems Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Be aware of the location of overhead powerlines before you start fencing.
- Avoid fencing near power lines if possible.
- If you must fence near powerlines, make sure all workers are aware of the power lines and mark out exclusion zones where possible.
- Use markers or signs to remind people of the presence of powerlines.

### Electricity and Gas Underground

- Be aware of the location of underground infrastructure before you start fencing. If in doubt, contact the service provider or Before You Dig Australia to help confirm locations of underground infrastructure.
- Avoid digging or driving posts near known gas and power lines.
- If you must dig, or drive posts near underground infrastructure and you don't know how to do so safely, contact your local supplier for assistance.

### Hot Work

- Wear appropriate PPE, such as safety glasses, gloves, and a fire-resistant apron.
- Clear the area around the worksite of any flammable materials.
- Have the appropriate fire extinguisher on hand.
- Be aware of the weather conditions and avoid hot work in windy conditions.
- Have an emergency plan in place.

### Manual Handling

- Training and awareness are key to avoiding manual handling injuries. *See the Manual Handling Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Use correct lifting and carrying techniques.
- Avoid lifting heavy or awkward objects by yourself.
- Use a lifting device if necessary.
- Avoid repetitive tasks or tasks that require awkward postures.





### Noise

- Training and awareness are key to safety when working in noisy environments. *See the Noise on Farms Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Wear appropriate PPE, such as ear-muffs or earplugs when exposed to loud noise.
- Minimise your exposure to loud noise by taking breaks often and by working in well-ventilated areas.

### Plant and Equipment

- Training and awareness are key to safety when working with and around items of plant. *See the Tractor Operation Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Inspect plant and equipment before use.
- Ensure communication procedures are in place.
- Warn others before starting or moving equipment.
- Be aware of the hazards associated with the plant and equipment you are using.

### Sharp Edges and Splinters

- Wear appropriate PPE, such as gloves and safety glasses when handling sharp objects.
- Warn others about sharp objects and splinters.
- When cutting or placing materials under strain ensure bystanders are out of harm's way.

### Links and Resources

Farmsafe Australia  
[farmsafe.org.au](http://farmsafe.org.au)

### Slips, Trips, and Falls

- Be aware of your surroundings and avoid hazards such as uneven ground, potholes, and loose objects.
- Remove as many slip, trip, and fall hazards as possible.
- Clearly mark any unmovable hazards like rocks, holes, and tree roots so that everyone can see them.
- Take special care if working on slopes or in wet slippery conditions.
- Wear appropriate footwear.

### Tensioning Wires

- Ensure wires are tensioned to manufacturer's specifications to reduce the risk of snapback. Using low grade or second-hand materials can reduce the flexibility of materials and increase the risk of breakages.
- Ensure strainers are in good working order prior to use.
- Ensure that you wear correct PPE when fencing, including eye protection.

### Tetanus

- Vaccination can prevent the risk of tetanus related health concerns.
- It is important that boosters are received in a timely manner to ensure coverage. Tetanus vaccinations usually last for a period of 10 years.

### Weather

- Be aware of the weather conditions and avoid fencing in extreme weather conditions.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the situation. Hats and long sleeve shirts, and long pants to protect against sunburn. Coats and gloves in winter to keep warm.

- Wear sunscreen as necessary.
- Take breaks often.
- Stay hydrated.
- Plan work so that the most physically demanding tasks are done at cooler times of day to avoid heat stress.

### Wildlife

- Wear appropriate PPE such as closed-in shoes, long pants, long shirts and gloves.
- Be aware of the wildlife in the area where you are fencing.
- Check underneath materials when lifting. Take precautions to avoid being bitten or scratched by wildlife.
- Take care if moving sticks, leaf litter, or other organic material that animals may be living or hiding in.
- Do not disturb wildlife.

### Zoonotic Diseases

- Training and awareness are key to safety when working in situations where you may be exposed to zoonotic diseases. *See the Zoonotic Diseases Toolbox Talk for more information.*
- Be aware of the zoonotic diseases that are present in your area.
- Take precautions to avoid being bitten or scratched by animals.
- Reduce dust exposure as much as possible.
- Wash your hands thoroughly following handling of any fencing materials. This is especially important after handling materials that have been exposed to animals, animal byproducts, or faeces.



# Toolbox Talks

## Facilitator Guide

### INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

#### How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

**Note:** This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

## A Practical Guide

# Fencing

### Introduction

- Welcome and Introduction to the session.
- Briefly outline the importance of staying safe while performing fencing tasks.

**Icebreaker** Consider starting with a brief question or scenario related to fencing to engage participants. For example, "What is your experience with building farm fences?"

### Distribution of Resources

Handout printed Toolbox Talks Information Sheets and any other resources related to fencing safety.

### Key Points

#### Hazards

- Chainsaws
- Chemicals
- Electricity Overhead
- Electricity Underground
- Hot Work
- Manual Handling
- Noise
- Plant and Equipment
- Sharp Edges and Splinters
- Slips, Trips and Falls
- Tensioning Wires
- Tetanus
- Weather
- Wildlife
- Zoonotic Diseases.

#### Preventing Injuries

Provide tips on how to prevent fencing injuries, such as:

- Wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Planning ahead and being aware of your surroundings.
- Using the correct tools and equipment safely.
- Taking breaks often to avoid fatigue.

#### Safe Fencing Practices

Discuss safe fencing practices, such as:

- Communication procedures.
- Using a spotter when operating machinery.
- Being aware of your surroundings.
- Taking breaks in hot weather.
- Wearing appropriate footwear.
- Knowing emergency plans.



### Interactive Discussion and Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, or questions related to agricultural fencing.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

### Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

### Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk.

Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

### Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this Toolbox Talk in their daily work.

### Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.

**Toolbox Talks**  
Facilitator Guide

CASE STUDIES



**Risk Management Tools**

[DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX](#)

Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing. All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

[farmsafe.org.au](http://farmsafe.org.au)

P. +61 2 6269 5622 | E. [info@farmsafe.org.au](mailto:info@farmsafe.org.au)

**Disclaimer:** This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

**CASE STUDY 1 At Risk of Snapping**

**Scenario**

Sarah decides to check some fences while casting an eye over the newly purchased wethers. She finds a section of fence where the top barb has snapped. She checks the toolbox and has a pair of strainers but no gloves or safety glasses. It's just a quick fix so Sarah thinks it's better to get it done now instead of heading all of the way back to the workshop to get her PPE.

QUESTION	ANSWER
Should Sarah proceed with the wire repair without the appropriate PPE to save time?	<b>NO</b> , Sarah is putting herself at significant risk if she proceeds with the repair without the appropriate PPE. If Sarah proceeds to put tension on the wire with strainers, the wire could snap again, causing significant injury to Sarah, who is not wearing the appropriate PPE. There is also a risk of cutting herself with the sharp, barb wire, increasing her risk of infection or even tetanus. Sarah should make a note of the repair to be done and then plan appropriately to complete the repairs when she has the time and the appropriate PPE.

**CASE STUDY 2 Snakes Alive**

**Scenario**

Frank is moving a pile of corrugated iron that is needed for his fencing job. He doesn't look underneath the iron first to check for snakes as all snakes should be asleep in holes in the ground during the day.

QUESTION	ANSWER
Is Frank correct in his assumption?	<b>NO</b> , Frank is not correct in his assumption that all snakes should be asleep in holes in the ground during the day. While many snakes are more active at night, there are many species of snakes that are active during the day, especially during warm weather. Snakes are cold-blooded animals, so they need to regulate their body temperature by basking in the sun. On warm days, snakes may be out basking in the sun even in the middle of the day. It is important to always be aware of your surroundings when working outdoors, especially in areas where snakes are known to be present. This includes checking under objects before moving them and being careful when stepping in tall grass or brush.

**CASE STUDY 3 Underground Powerline Encounter**

**Scenario**

Sarah and Frank have looked at a farm map when planning their fencing work. There is an underground powerline somewhere in the area but they aren't sure exactly where.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What should they do?	If Sarah and Frank are unsure about the location of an underground powerline, they should use Before You Dig Australia or contact their local utility company to have the line marked. This is a free service and it is very important to do before any digging begins. Once the utility company has marked the location of the powerline, Sarah and Frank should carefully plan their work to avoid digging near the line. If they need to dig near the line, they should hand dig and use caution. If they do accidentally hit the powerline, they should stop digging immediately and call their local utility company. It is also important to note that underground powerlines may not be marked on all farm maps. Therefore, it is always best to contact your local utility company to have the line marked, even if you think you know where it is located.

**Toolbox Talks**  
Facilitator Guide

# On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box - they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

**On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants**

**EMPLOYER – DETAILS**

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature

**1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS**

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature



# Toolbox Talks Facilitator Guide

A Practical Guide  
Fencing

## On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED



**Australian Government**  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through funding from the Australian Government's National Farm Safety Education Fund.

### 2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature

### 3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature

### 4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
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Signature

### 5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
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