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# Badger Gates

Judith J Rowe



## BADGER GATES

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*Forestry Commission*

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### INTRODUCTION

Rabbit fencing may again become an essential protection to new planting. Where badgers occur in large numbers and fence-lines, particularly new ones, cut across their runs, especially in the vicinity of setts, holes are likely to be torn in the netting by the badgers. They may also excavate underneath fences if the soil is suitable. It has been found that careful, progressive erection of a badger gate, as shown on the cover—whenever possible at the time the fence is erected—can prevent physical damage by badgers to the fence.

### METHOD OF ERECTION

If badger gates are essential in a fence, the runs must be located as soon as the fence-line is determined. Work on gates at each badger run crossing the fence line should proceed simultaneously. The work is best done over six to eight weeks in early summer when badger activity is high and runs can be relatively easily recognised. The woodwork of the gate should be treated in the same way as the woodwork of the fence of which it is part so that both have approximately the same life expectancy.

At the time the netting is put on the fence a gap is cut in it at the point where the run crosses the fence-line. The gap should measure about 200 mm across and 270 mm high; these dimensions provide the small overlaps needed for stapling the netting to the frame. Where spring steel fencing is in use sods should be put under the ground-level line wire across the run so that the wire is at ground level and can be earthed over. For a week nothing else is done but the fence should be checked daily

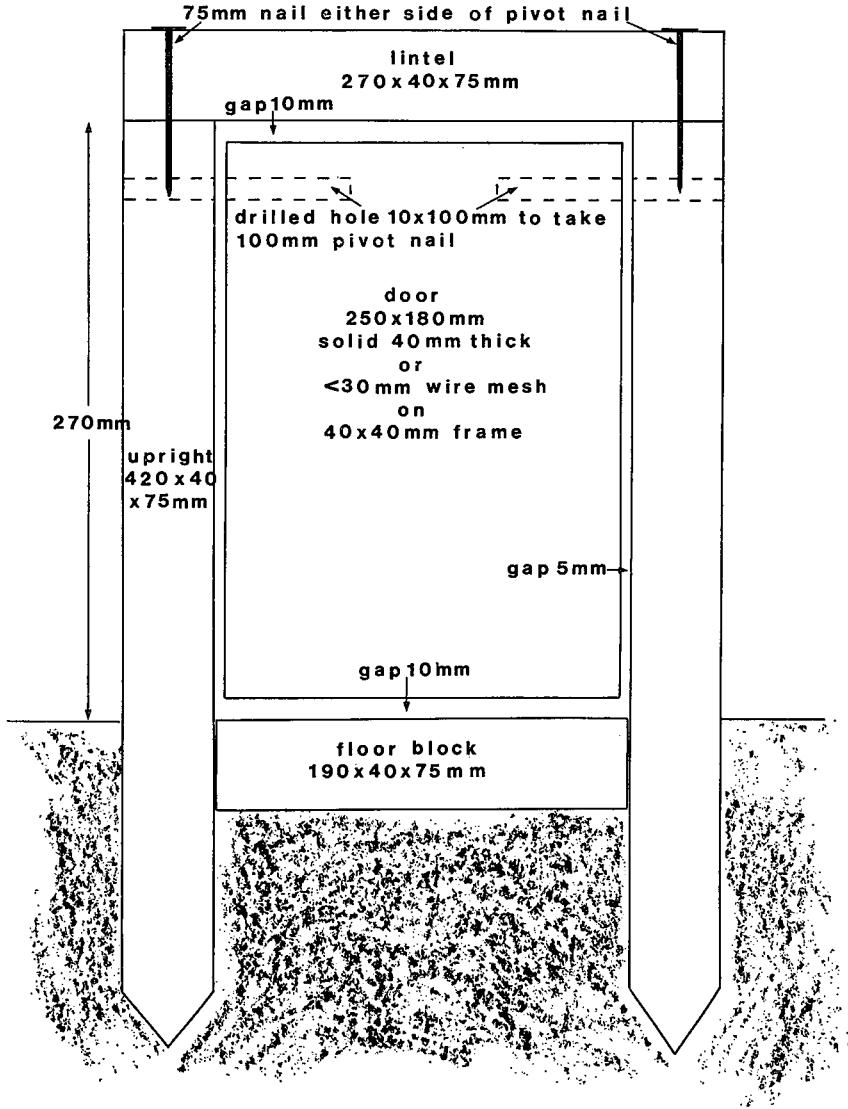
for signs of damage and to see that badgers are using the gap. If damage to the fence does occur away from the gap, painting the bottom 150 mm of the netting with a smelly, short-lived deterrent such as creosote to about 4 m of each side of the run will help to prevent it. No work should be done on the gaps until badgers are using them.

The next stage is to lay the floor: a block of wood 190 × 40 × 75 mm. This block goes in just below soil level and replaces a sod under the ground-level line wire. The line wire should be stapled to the block. Block and line wire should again be earthed over. In the course of the next few days, badgers passing through the gap will wear away the covering soil but should accept the wired block. A second week should be allowed to pass with daily checks if possible that the run and gateway are in use.

If all is well, the drilled uprights complete with the lintel should be driven in either side of the floor at the beginning of the third week and the netting stapled around the uprights and the lintel. This frame should be driven in to provide a gap 270 mm high and 190 mm wide. During the next week the gateway should be observed and the fence line checked to see if further damage is occurring. If damage does occur, the provision of an additional badger gate should be considered.

If use continues, a wooden half-door can be suspended from the top of the frame, swinging freely from nails through the holes drilled previously in the uprights. Provided use continues, a full-sized door, which will weigh about 1.1 kg and measures 180 × 250 × 40 mm, can be hung after another week. The door should have a 5 mm gap at the sides and 10 mm gaps at top and bottom around it to ensure that it will continue to swing freely

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whatever the weather. The door can consist of a wooden frame of 40 × 40 mm timber covered with wire mesh not more than 30 mm in mesh size.

### OTHER USERS

Foxes, and even pheasants, have been observed to use badger gates but rabbits appear to find the weight, and need to push, beyond their ability to learn. There is a danger that rabbits will use the gaps during the gate erection period: however, the danger is much greater that they will use gaps and holes created by the badger in the absence of gates. It is advisable that the fence and its badger gates are erected in the season prior to planting for this reason: any rabbits that do enter or are already established on the enclosed area can then be removed before the trees are at risk.

### MAINTENANCE

Once erected, the gates should need little maintenance but they should be checked

regularly, especially in their first autumn, to make sure that they have not been blocked by leaves and twigs.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The method described here owes its development largely to Forester R. J. King and the many keepers, rangers and naturalists who have been concerned with managing wildlife to prevent damage to human interests without causing undue mortality or interference to any wildlife species.

The cover photo is from the Forestry Commission collection.

### REFERENCE

King, R. J., 1964. The Badger Gate, *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, LVIII(4): 311–319.

A general account of *Badgers in Woodlands*, by Ernest Neal, is published under that title as Forest Record 103, HMSO, 30p.

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