

Hedgerow Netting Information Sheet

Ideally vegetation clearance, such as hedgerow removal, should be timed to avoid the bird breeding season, which runs from March to September (inclusive). This is to prevent adverse impacts to any active bird nests present and therefore ensure wildlife legislation is not breached.

In some circumstances a hedgerow may have been identified as requiring removal (possibly to permit an anticipated development or the hedgerow occurs along a pipeline route), however the hedgerow cannot be removed prior to the bird breeding season as the relevant permissions or land access consents have not been granted. In these circumstances it may be deemed appropriate to try and prevent birds from nesting within a hedgerow, and one method to stop birds from nesting is to cover the hedgerow in netting. The netting prevents birds from nesting within the hedgerow, and therefore should the consent to remove the hedgerow be granted during the bird breeding season, the hedgerow can be removed without affecting any active nests.

EMEC Ecology has the capability to net hedgerows and has carried out a number of projects in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The netting process isolates the hedgerow (or hedgerow section) that is required to be removed and approximately 3m either side (this will ensure no birds nest close to the section to be removed). The netting used is similar to debris netting used on building sites (often to cover scaffolding), and is secured at both the sides and edges of the hedgerow with pegs and cable ties. It is important to ensure that no gaps, raised sections or tears occur in the netting itself, or where the netting meets the ground. Any such gaps could allow access for birds to enter the netted hedgerow and build nests.



Although no method can guarantee birds will not be able to nest within a hedgerow (gaps and tears can occur in the netting, see below), this process has been used on many occasions to successfully allow hedgerows to be removed during the bird breeding season, and therefore avoid major delays.



Hedgerow netting can be carried out between October and February (i.e. outside the bird breeding season), however February is considered the most suitable time, as when netting is left in place for a significant period of time, the chances of gaps or tears occurring increases. The netting is also highly visible and therefore possibly subject to vandalism, and can be susceptible to damage by stock (and in some circumstances may not be suitable). Therefore, ideally the netting would be installed in February prior to the bird breeding season in which the hedgerow may need to be removed. Hedgerow netting can however be carried out during the bird breeding season if an experienced ecologist can confirm that there are no active nests present.

Prior to being netted the hedgerow should ideally be flailed (outside the bird breeding season), as this makes the netting process more straightforward and therefore easier (and faster) to complete. Where a section of hedgerow is to be removed, it is normally necessary to cut a thin strip through the hedgerow to allow the ends to be sealed effectively. Where this flailing and cutting cannot be undertaken the process takes longer and is therefore becomes more costly.

If you are considering asking EMEC Ecology for a quotation to complete hedgerow netting at your site, please provide us with photographs and the precise measurements of the hedgerow that will require netting (including maximum height, width and length) and we will be happy to provide you with a quotation. In some cases we may need to make a site visit prior to providing a confirmed quotation.



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