pinemarten.ie – a national resource about pine martens in Ireland

How to protect poultry at your house

Four key points

- 1. Use *electrified netting or fencing* to protect your poultry. These are proven to be the most effective deterrent against pine martens climbing up and over fencing used to contain poultry. The electric shock frightens but does not kill or injure the pine marten.
- 2. Position hen houses or runs at a *distance of 3m* from nearby trees and walls to prevent a marten jumping down into the areas used by the poultry.
- 3. Ensure the hen house and all fencing are maintained to a high standard by *replacing rotting timbers and repairing gaps* in fences.
- 4. Regularly check for signs of digging under the hen house or run.



Pine martens are curious, intelligent and opportunistic predators.

A pine marten can squeeze through an opening 45-50mm in size, and can also enlarge an existing small opening in rotten timber, by chewing around the edges.



A pine marten can squeeze through a gap of 45-50mm

It is important to regularly inspect your pen or hen house, for gaps in netting, and or deteriorating or rotting wood. It is also important to securely shut the hen house door at night, because a pine marten can lift a door if it is not secured.



Lifting doors on hen houses should be secured

Inspect deteriorating or rotting wood for gaps

The most effective way to protect poultry, is to use electric netting or fencing. It shocks but does not harm the pine marten.



Example of electrified netting system for poultry in Co. Clare

Electric poultry netting is available in rolls of 25m or 50m. The netting is supplied with supporting vertical posts and a built-in gate



Electrified netting with vertical single- or double- pronged posts

The netting is electrified using a rechargeable battery which must be placed inside a waterproof container. The battery is recharged using mains electricity.



Electrified netting with rechargeable battery housed in water-proof container

The flow of electricity is controlled by a device called an energiser which is connected to both the battery and the electric fence. The electricity can be turned on and off from using a switch located outside the netting.



The Energiser connects to the earth, the fence and the battery



Electricity can controlled from a switch outside the netting



Laying a roll of damp proof course fence prevents the current from being short-circuited

It is important to keep the bottom of the netting clear of vegetation, to prevent the electric current being short-circuited. This can be achieved either by spraying with herbicide, or by using a length of damp proof course (DPC) membrane underneath the netting.

Non-electrified mesh of a smaller diameter can be placed inside the electric netting, to prevent very young birds from escaping.



Second layer of non-electrified netting for smaller birds

An alternative to the electrified poultry netting, is to construct an electrified fence using electric fencing twine. This type of fence is built by attaching strands of electric twine to plastic fence posts. Wooden posts with electric twine which is positioned at various heights off the ground, will prevent a marten squeezing under the fence line. Plastic insulators are used to secure the twine in place. The fence twine is electrified in the same way as the electrified netting - by using an energiser and a rechargeable battery.



Electric fence twine



Strands of electrified fencing twine attached to plastic and wooden fence posts



Plastic insulators, used to secure fencing twine to wooden posts

Pine martens are agile climbers. A pine marten can jump a horizontal distance of up to 2 meters and can climb trees with ease. So, it is essential that a hen house or run is located at least 3 meters away from trees or a wall.



Electrified netting in Co. Galway, positioned away from trees or a wall, so that a pine marten cannot gain entry from above