NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

SPECIFICATION GUIDE ADDENDUM

FENCE

(Feet)

Code 382

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY FENCE

This specification guide addendum describes required adaptations and additional considerations for fence designs where the goal is to have wildlife friendly fence. Additional design requirements for fence not covered here are found in the Colorado NRCS Fence Specification Guide.

Common Fence-Wildlife Concerns:
Fences are constructed barriers to animals or people, however in some situations; fences may inadvertently prevent normal wildlife movement. The most common ways fences interfere with wildlife movement are:

- The fence is too high for animals (e.g. deer and elk) to clear the fence.
- When the spacing between the top two wires is too close, animals, especially deer and elk, trying to jump over the fence may catch their hind legs in the wires, causing the wires to twist. When the animal's legs get caught in the twisted fence, the result is injury or death to the animal and damage to the fence.
- Loose wires twist easily resulting in the same problems identified above.
- When the bottom wire is too close to the ground, it prevents animals from passing under the fence.
- When the bottom wire is barbed, it can imbed in the animal's skin as the animal attempts to go under the fence, causing damage to both the fence and the animal.

Required Criteria:
The following five criteria must be met to meet NRCS wildlife friendly fence requirements and to solve the problems described above.

- Set the top wire to a maximum of 42 inches above the ground surface.
- Maintain 12 inch spacing between the top two wires.
- Keep all wires tight.
- Set the bottom wire at least 16 inches above the ground surface.
- Replace the bottom strand of barbed wire with smooth wire, or use high-tensile wire for the fence.

Notes:
- The middle and bottom wires of 4 strand fences will be spaced equally.
- It is not possible to adapt woven wire fences to meet wildlife friendly requirements.

Additional Considerations:
- Consider whether or not a fence is needed or if the amount of fence can be reduced.
- Consider where wildlife travel lanes/corridors are located and begin fence modification efforts in these areas.

- Avoid woven wire wherever possible.
- Consider lay-down or adjustable wire for sections of fence in areas with heavy wildlife traffic. These sections of fence can be opened up when livestock are not in the pasture, allowing for wildlife passage.
- Consider leaving gates open when livestock are not present to allow for wildlife passage.
- In areas with new fence or in wildlife travel lanes, the animal may not see the fence and either runs or flies into it. The solution to this problem is to mark the top wire or top two wires. A variety of marking methods may be used to increase fence visibility.
    - Use vinyl coated wire for the top wire
    - Add a top pole or rail to the fence
    - Mark the top wires with vinyl siding trim strips. The Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, has a good publication on this method at: http://www.suttoncenter.org/fence_marking.pdf.
    - Other locally acceptable marking methods.
    - Marking methods to avoid include marking tape or large pieces of siding. Problems with these methods include not holding up in wind (tape) or weighting down the fence wires. These methods may also frighten animals attempting to cross the fence by flapping in the wind and making noise.
- The Colorado Division of Wildlife publication entitled, "Fencing with Wildlife in Mind" elaborates on these considerations and contains additional considerations that may be helpful in designing fences in areas where wildlife require passage.