

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
MONTANA CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

FENCE (FEET)

CODE 382

DEFINITION

A constructed barrier to animals or people.

PURPOSE

This practice facilitates the accomplishment of conservation objectives by providing a means to control movement of animals and people, including vehicles.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied on any area where management of animal or human movement is needed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Fencing materials, type and design of fence installed shall be of a high quality and durability. The type and design of fence installed will meet the management objectives and site challenges. Based on need, fences may be permanent, portable, or temporary.

Fences shall be positioned to facilitate management requirements. Ingress/egress features such as gates and cattle guards shall be planned. The fence design and installation should have the life expectancy appropriate for management objectives and shall follow all federal, state, tribal and local laws and regulations. **Montana State law prohibits fencing across any navigable waterway.**

Height, size, spacing and type of materials used will provide the desired control, life expectancy, and management of animals and people of concern.

All power fences must be grounded to protect humans, animals, wildlife and power fence equipment and materials from lightning. Safety guidelines for each type of fence must be strictly adhered to. When constructing power fences, it is critical that the energizer has sufficient output, the fence is grounded correctly, ample cut-off switches are installed in necessary locations and fence height and wire spacing are adhered to as outlined in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV, Conservation Practice Specification, Power Fence (Code 382).

CONSIDERATIONS

The fence design and location should consider: topography, soil properties, livestock management and safety, livestock trailing, wildlife class and movement, location and adequacy of water facilities, development of potential grazing systems, human access and safety, landscape aesthetics, erosion problems, moisture conditions, flooding potential, stream crossings, and durability of materials. When appropriate, natural barriers should be utilized instead of fencing.

Where applicable, cleared rights-of-way may be established which would facilitate fence construction and maintenance. Avoid clearing of vegetation during the nesting season for migratory birds.

Fences across gullies, canyons or streams may require special bracing, designs or approaches.

Fence design and location should consider ease of access for construction, repair and maintenance.

Fence construction requiring the removal of existing unusable fence should provide for the proper disposal of scrap materials to prevent harm to animals, people and equipment.

NRCS, MT
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Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

NOTE: This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates NRCS National Standards.
This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates Montana Supplement.

Design the fence for the appropriate level of protection and time for protection needed. For example, if protection is needed for only one or two years, a temporary power fence may be all that is needed.

Sandy soils may require more braces and closer spacing than firm soils. Rocky soils may require fences built of rock jacks with figure-four posts or straddle jacks. Marshy areas may require the construction of figure-four or straddle jack posts with long flotation boards that keep the fence on top of the marsh.

Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) treated wood posts have not been shown to leach their chemical treatments into groundwater or surface water. However, it is recommended that they should not be used where treated wood may come into contact with water sources (wetlands, streams, high water tables, etc.). Other chemically treated and pressure-treated wood posts may be used in these areas (EPA 2002). Areas of light snow usually do not require special fencing designs. However, blown snow may approximate heavy snow conditions and may require special fence designs. Fences exposed to heavy snow may require sturdier stays, straddle jacks with wire or pole fencing, or worm, block and log, post and pole wood fences or let-down fences.

Additional Considerations for Wildlife

Where possible, the fence design should account for safe passage of wildlife. Where deer, elk or moose are a concern, fences should not exceed 42 inches in height.

Where deer are a concern, 12 to 15 inches of space between the top and second wire will help prevent animals from hooking their back legs between the wires when they jump.

Antelope can generally pass under wire fences that are 16-18 inches above the ground. Appropriate fence openings can be installed across known antelope trails to facilitate safe crossings.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications are to be prepared for all fence types, installations and specific sites. Requirements for applying the practice to achieve all of its intended purposes shall be described.

Manufacturer's guidelines will be followed closely during installation of each type of fence to assure that all components are assembled properly.

It is essential to coordinate planning with anyone who will be affected by the fence. When constructing a fence on private land, wildlife migration routes or corridors may be disturbed. Consult wildlife managers as needed.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Regular inspection of fences should be part of an ongoing maintenance program. Inspection of fences after storms and other disturbance events is necessary to insure the continued proper function of the fence. Maintenance and repairs will be performed in a timely manner as needed, including tree/limb removal and water gap replacement. **Minimum life expectancy is 20 years.**

Remove and properly discard all broken fencing material and hardware. All necessary precautions should be taken to ensure the safety of construction and maintenance crews.

Electric fences need to be inspected periodically to remove grasses, forbs, shrub branches and tree limbs that are touching the wires. It is essential to remove all vegetation from the path of electrical fence wires, especially before snowfall. This permits proper grounding of the fence in all seasons.

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