

Conservation Practice Fact Sheet



Electric fence is considered a psychological barrier as compared to a barbed wire fence which is a physical barrier. Livestock have to be introduced to electric fence in a manner that will allow them to slowly come into contact with the fence. They should receive an electric shock which will imprint on their mind that the fence is not something that they want to touch again. The livestock should be introduced to the fence in a slow calm manner which will allow them to find the fence on their own time and not run through it.

Ensure that quality products are used in the electric fencing system. The charger should be a low-impedance energizer that is capable of producing a minimum of 5000 volts. The multi-stranded training fence should be constructed of a highly visible material such as ½ wide poly-tape and have a minimum of 3 strands. Use white polywire or tape as animals see in contrast rather than seeing colors. Do not use colored wire. The middle strand should be located nose high to the animals that are being trained to the fence. Large animals can be trained with one strand of wire at such a height that when the animal stretches its nose out, it comes in contact with the wire. The tendency is for the animal to jump forward and go through the wire.

The best place to locate the training fence is in a working corral or lot area large enough to allow the animals to move around and not be crowded together. The fence should be constructed as a wing wall extending from the edge of the corral to the middle of the area. It should not be located near the water or feed troughs. The livestock will associate pain with eating and drinking if the cattle get shocked near the water or feed troughs and go off feed. If the animal runs through the wire or jumps over it with that initial shock, simply start over. This is one reason to have the animals in a corral or well-controlled area. Some people prefer to put feed under the wire to ensure they contact the fence.

Since some livestock may run through the fence at first, check the fence periodically and make needed repairs to assure that the fence is in good working order and still carrying the minimum 5000 volts. The training should be done for a 24-hour period before releasing the cattle to the larger paddocks. This is especially true for newly purchased cattle that may have a large flight zone. Many people have experienced “train wrecks” when turning fresh cattle out into a field without training them to electric fence first. Properly trained cattle are effectively controlled with electric fence, such as in this weaning process shown in the picture.

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