



## Fence Fact Sheet

Applicable to conservation practice Fence - 382

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - North Dakota

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### What is the purpose of Fencing:

Fencing is used as a constructed barrier to livestock, wildlife or people.

### How Fencing helps:

There are basically 2 types of fences that are used: protective and general purpose.

- **Protective** fencing is used to exclude livestock and/or humans from areas where a high degree of protection is needed, such as agricultural waste management structures, spring developments, portions of stock ponds, seeps, critical area plantings, and windbreaks. These fences are constructed from either chain link, woven wire, or 4-wire barbed.
- **A general purpose** fence is designed to contain or control the movement of livestock. These fences are either electric (power), barbed, or woven wire.

### To apply this practice:

A variety of fence designs are available to fit the purpose and site characteristics. The design should consider:

- ✓ Topography
- ✓ Soil type or ecological site
- ✓ Kinds of livestock
- ✓ Habits of livestock and wildlife
- ✓ Location and adequacy of water facilities
- ✓ Development of potential grazing systems

*All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis.*

When deciding whether to build an electric (power) fence or barbed wire fence, consider:

- ✓ An electric or power fence is a **psychological** barrier, not a **physical** one
  - It is not the number of wires or how tight the fence is, it is the strong **shocking** power that controls animals
  - This fence depends on the animal's memory
  - Wires are spaced so when an animal contacts the wires, it will back up instead of going through the fence
- ✓ Electric or power fences are designed to be flexible
- ✓ Barbed wire fences are designed to be tight
- ✓ The number one problem with failed electric fences is **improper grounding**
- ✓ **Don't electrify barbed wire** – if an animal gets caught in the barbs, the shock could kill it
- ✓ Two electrified wires with no ground wire does not mean double the shocking power
- ✓ Yellow insulators are more apt to be eaten by deer than black insulators

Fencing considerations:

- ✓ **DO** make sure that the brace post is **8 feet** in length when constructing corner, in-line and gate braces, unless using the diagonal brace
- ✓ **DO** make sure correct wire spacing is used for the number of wires installed
- ✓ **DO** make sure correct post spacing is used when constructing the fence
- ✓ **DO** make sure all materials used in construction are **new**
- ✓ **DO** follow specifications, especially if receiving cost share
- ✓ **DO** request a variance **before** construction, if plans differ from specifications
- ✓ **DO** share design and specification information with construction contractors
- ✓ **DON'T** mix barbed wire with electric (power) wire on the same fence
  - Energizing barbed wire or using barbed wire as the ground wire with an energized smooth wire creates safety concerns. Animals or people can get caught on the barbs and be subjected to repeated, high amperage shocks.

**Maintenance:**

With regular inspections, fences designed and built according to specifications should last 20 or more years.

- Regular inspection of fences should be part of an on-going maintenance program
- Inspection after storm events is needed to insure endurance of the fence

**Where to get help:**

For more information or site specific assistance on fencing and/or other technical assistance, please contact you local Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office, Soil Conservation District Office, or your local County Extension Service.