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Shock Therapy

How to design an electric fence that works for your farm.

BY ANN LARKIN HANSEN

MODERN ELECTRIC FENCING is perhaps the most versatile and cost-effective tool available for containing domestic animals or protecting plantings, poultry and livestock. It also has revolutionized sustainable agriculture by making rotational grazing (aka management-intensive grazing) easy and flexible.

But an electric fence works only if all the pieces are connected right and the type, number and height of wires are suited to the critters you want to keep in or out.

Types of Wires

Wires for electric fences are either metal or plastic. Metal wire is best for permanent structures, while the light, flexible plastic wires (called polywire) are perfect for temporary fences. Use thicker polyrope or polyribbon for more visible enclosures.

For small areas and poultry, you can't beat electric net fencing. But the larger the area, the less practical it becomes since it's expensive as well as awkward to set up and move.

To use wires instead of net, start with our recommendations for heights and spacing for various animals (thanks to electric >>

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Read about the anatomy of an electric fence, get more customization tips, and order author Ann Larkin Hansen's "Electric Fencing: How to Choose, Build, and Maintain the Best Fence for Your Plants and Animals" at myFarmLife.com/electricfence.

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