

Hot Tips from Electric Fencers

Hot tips:

- * Use quality materials, in particular insulators for the corners; they are cost effective in the end.
- * Buy a larger energizer than you need: your system will grow into it.
- * Ground effectively with several galvanized ground rods 6-8' long.
- * For fence lengths >900' reduce stress on corners by putting strainers in the middle so they tighten both ways.
- * Build sturdy 2 post corners with 8' ties between 7 to 8' posts.
- * Include portable step-in posts with poly twine in your grazing program.

For more information about electric fencing call :

- * Glenn Hogberg of Progress at (250) 843-7653, or
- * Horst David of Tomslake at (250) 786-5931.

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P.O. Box 908
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V1G 1L6

Cost Efficiency of Electric Fencing

Fencing plays a major role in most forage managers' planning. There are several choices and considerations to make when constructing a fence. Cost and time are the most important factors for ranchers.

Glenn Hogberg of Progress, feels that "electric fencing is more cost efficient than the standard 4 strand barb-wire fence I build. I use primarily electric fencing for my intensive grazing program and feel it is definitely as effective as barb-wire fences." Glenn uses one strand for his portable divider fences, and 2 strands of electric

wire for his permanent perimeter fences. Both wires are kept hot.

Horst David of Tomslake, however uses primarily only one strand fences. Ninety nine percent of his fences are only one strand and he feels that one strand is adequate and is planning to remove his second strand from his two stranded fences.

Jim Strasky of Farmington, feels "the materials for the electric fences I put up this summer were cheaper than for barb wire fences I put up in other years."

Tips on Choice of Insulators

There are many kinds of insulators.

Fred Burres of Farmington suggests "Insulators with plastic pins are the kind of insulators I prefer to use. They enable me to raise the wire at any spot along the fence." Fred intensively grazes his cattle and moves them on a daily basis.

Horst David says "a corner insulator should be thick so that it can stand many years of constant voltage passing by it without disintegrating. I have some corner insulators which only last three years; they are not robust enough to handle constant voltage. I think that the plastic tubing insulators work well, but I have to be careful when attaching them to the post, I can't pound the staple in too far or the plastic breaks and the insulator shorts out. I find I have to try everything once to find out what works best for me on my ranch."

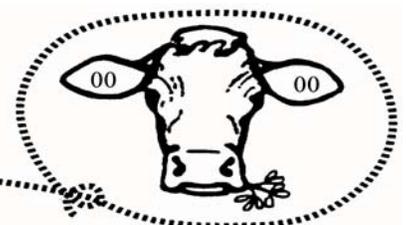


Fred Burres prefers insulators with plastic pins to enable him to raise the wire at any spot on a daily basis.



Heavy insulators, especially for corners, are suited to handling the strain of the high tensile electric wire.

Peace River Forage Association
of British Columbia





Underground wires at a gate in a pasture on Hogberg Ranch.

“The key to electric fencing is not to be cheap. Pay the extra for quality and buy a larger energizer than you think you need.”
Horst David



Step-posts made from rebar by Ben Hansen add to flexibility and portability of electric fences.

Gates for Electric Fencing

There are several considerations when constructing the electric wire gate. Firstly, how will the gate be fastened? There are many fasteners available in stores today. The most frequently used one in the Peace country has a hook on one end, an insulated spring handle in the middle, and is permanently fastened to the wire on the other end. The gate can easily be fastened and unfastened by people but not by animals.

The second factor is how will the electrical circuit be maintained when the gate is open? **Glenn Hogberg** runs a hot wire underground in a plastic tubing at his gates. **Horst David** and **Jim Strasky** have underground wires as well, so that the circuit is always complete even if some gates are open.

Fred Bures runs an overhead wire above his gates by attaching a 2x4 to the top of his gate posts. This enables a hot wire to run over the gate, while vehicles or cattle can pass underneath without receiving a shock.

Ben Hansen of Taylor, uses both methods for his gates. These overhead/ underground wires at the gates keep the fence hot at all times. “Even when gates are open, there is always a complete circuit with no loss of energy or volts.” Ben has also built a self closing gate (see future forage fact for details). Ben has this advice for easy moving between gates: “unhook the wire from 2 or 3 posts, then use a 2” plastic pipe notched in the top, to hook and raise the wire for the animals to move under.”

Energizers for Your Electric Fence

There are several choices of energizers. Energizers are powered either by solar energy or by electricity. Solar powered may be cheaper to run, but one drawback of these energizers is the fact that the sun is not up 24 hours a day.

Jim Strasky says “you don’t need to tighten your wires as tight because the imprinting with a good energizer, not the tension keeps your animals in.” **Ernie Nimitz** advises “imprint your livestock with

a 5-15 joules energizer.”

Horst David feels “The key to electric fencing is to pay the extra for quality, buy a larger energizer than you think you need. You will probably be adding more wire.” Horst runs 12 ½ gauge tensile wire and aluminum wire from the energizer to get enough volts out to the field fences. Isolation switches are a good investment to turn off the electricity around some of your pastures when not in use.

Summary Comments about Electric Fencing

Fencing is a major part of a forage managers plan; and electric fencing seems to be the choice of more and more ranchers... especially ranchers who are intensively grazing, and moving their cattle and fences regularly. Electric fencing is considered by many a cheaper and more effective method of fencing.

Ernie Nimitz summarizes in these words “I would never consider any other method of fencing. A one or two wire high tensile electric fence is generally cheaper to build than a 3 or 4 strand barb wire fence. The bonus is: it is much more effective at containing your livestock. Electric fence is new technology; barb wire is old technology.”

Compiled by: Julie Robinson and Sandra Burton in the Fall of 2000

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