

Erecting fences on the farm

Francois Swanepoel

ARC-Natural Resources and Engineering, Agricultural Engineering Campus

Wire fences enable farmers to fence in their property, to keep their animals from straying and the neighbours from trespassing onto their lands. Fences protect stock against vermin and discourage stock thieving. Fences make it easy to divide farm stock into appropriately sized herds. It is also a vital instrument in Biosecurity. Various veld types can be partitioned to form camps where grazing can be utilised optimally and rested periodically according to seasonal requirements.

The use of wire fences requires responsible management from the farmer. Too many animals are sometimes kept on too small an area for too long, simply because the seasonal elements of grazing are not taken into consideration and the animals suffer when the grazing deteriorates. This also results in soil erosion.

Like any farm investment, fencing must be utilised thoughtfully and how well or how badly a farmer plans and erects those fences will lead to either improvement or deterioration of his lands and stock.

It is said that the erection and maintenance

of farm fencing reflect a farmer's managerial ability. A neat and effective fence makes a good impression on a visitor; and since it confines animals to where they should be, it helps greatly in maintaining good relations with neighbours.

Requirements of a good fence

A good fence should have the following features:

- It should be in a perfectly straight line from straining post to straining post, with all the post standards standing in perfect alignment.
- The straining, corner and gate posts should be sturdy, be set vertically into the ground and be well anchored.
- All the other posts, standards and droppers should stand erect and maintain the same height above ground level. In this way, the undulations of the ground are followed.
- Straining posts should not be too far apart – the closer they are and the closer the standards are together, the sturdier the fence.
- Irrespective of the number and type of wire strands used, each should be at a specific height above ground level, be parallel to the other and be well secured to each standard

in such a manner that it cannot be shifted vertically. The more wire strands in a fence of a particular height, the more difficult it is for man or stock to creep through them.

- Droppers must be so spaced that the distances between the standards are equally divided; they must stand erect, and the wire strands must be securely tied to them at the same spacing as on the standard.

A good fence can never be erected with inferior material. Heavy galvanized wires are an investment for years to come. Remember to keep grass short near fences to prevent veld fire damage to the zinc coating.

Game-proof fences

Game farming has caught on considerably in recent years. It is inevitable that fences which are to contain game will demand more as far as strength and quality are concerned. The following minimum requirements have been laid down for game-proof fences.

- Group I Game: Kudu, eland, impala, waterbuck, buffalo – 2,4 m high with 21 strands.
- Group II Game: Gemsbuck, (Oryx gazella), red hartebeest, gnu or wildebeest, sable antelope, zebra – 1,8 m high with 16

strands.

- Group III Game: Blesbok, bontebok, springbok, rhebok, sable antelope, zebra – 1,8 m high with 16 strands.
- Group IV: Ostriches. Although not strictly game in the true sense of the word, there are many similar behaviour traits – 1,8 m high with six wire strands, which must be of plain wire. For ostrich chickens, wire netting is used.

Important factors that should be kept in mind when erecting farm fences

- The height of the fence
- Wiring
- Standards and droppers
- Straining, corner and gate posts
- Passageways through fences
- Erection of the fences
- General aspects such as costing, quantities and strength.

A complete manual for the erection of farm fences is available at the ARC-NRE Agricultural Engineering campus. To order the manual contact Elmarie Stoltz at StoltzE@arc.agric.za For technical inquiries contact Francois Swanepoel at SwanpoelF@arc.agric.za

