



## Choosing the Right Fence Material

By: Nicolina Foti

There is the saying, “Good fences make good neighbors.” And that stands true for livestock as well. I have had horses all of my life, and I have had a great deal of experience with fencing in cows. One thing I have learned is the right fencing makes all the difference. The difference between a restful night’s sleep and being woken up at 4:30 am because there are loose cows in the road. Instead of going on about each animal’s most ideal fencing situation, we are going to look at different fencing materials. As many of us know, there is more than one way to build a fence, and the basics of it, understanding the materials you are using and how to utilize them best.

### -Barbed wire

Barbed wire is one of the oldest fencing materials, and it can get a bad rap. What is great about barbed wire is it does not need to be electrified, so you don’t have to worry about the fence getting grounded. It is also strong. I have had many a tree come down in a bad storm, and while the fence was on the ground, it was still intact, cut the tree, tack the fence back up, and we were good to go. Barbed wire is doubled and sometimes tripled stranded, meaning it has several strands of wire twisted together for strength. This is important because cows and other larger livestock like horses love to lean on the fence. Well, you know, “the grass is always greener on the other side.”

What gives barbed wire its bad wrap is the barbs. Especially among horse people, barbed wire is looked at as an unsafe fencing material. This is because if the horses were to get tangled into the fence, the more they struggle to get, the more entangled they get. While this is true, many horse people still use barbed wire, and when it is adequately maintained, more times than not, you will see little issues with it. The reasons for the barbs are to deter livestock from leaning or pushing through the fence. As electric wire fencing has a shock to prevent livestock from testing the fence, the barbs do the same.

Maintenance on barbwire is minimal, but like any fence in our area come spring going around and tightening up loose spots is normal. The best thing about barbwire fencing if done right, it will be there for many years to come.



## Nylon Tape and Braided fencing



### -Electric Wire

Electric wire fencing has come along way and now comes in many forms. From smooth wire fencing, braided “rope,” and electric “Tape fencing.” Smooth wire is what it sounds like it is a smooth, bare electrified wire. This will allow the greatest contact when livestock or regrettably, I will admit the farmer touching the fence and receiving a shock. An issue with smooth wire fencing is its visibility. Because of this, many times you will see neon ribbons hanging from the wire so the livestock and the farmer can see the fence. Because of its hard visibility, we now have the electrified “rope” and “tape” fencing. These are nylon materials with electric wire braided or woven in, allowing it to deliver a shock but makes the fence more visible. This is a popular choice as the electric shock is a great deterrent for livestock, and it is viewed as a safe, cost-effective choice.

Maintenance of electric wire fencing is similar to barbwire. It will have to be tightened at least once a year. Other than that, it is relatively low maintenance.

**Smooth Electric Wire** →



### -Wood Fencing

Wood fencing is also an old and stoic choice. There is something beautiful about wood fencing on a farm. While it is gorgeous, it can be costly and less effective if not put incorrectly. When installing wooden fences attaching the boards to the posts is extremely important. The boards are always attached to the inside of the posts; this is because if an animal was to push on the fence, they could push the boards of the posts whether you use nails or screws. But when the boards are attached to the inside of the posts unless they push the posts down, there is no way they can push the boards off.



Moreover, wood fencing has few Sharpe edges and is highly visible, so it is a popular choice, not to mention it is beautiful when done. A downfall to wood fencing is it can be costly to put up and requires a great deal of maintenance. Boards have to be reattached and many times have to be repainted or replaced from animals chewing them.

## -No climb fencing

On a similar plain as wood fencing is no climb fencing. This is a woven wire cage-like fencing. This is a popular choice among all sizes of livestock from pig's sheep to cows and horses. The difference between the types of no climb for different types of livestock will be the size of the spacing in the grids, and the gage of wire the fence is made out of. The larger the animal, the heavier the gage wire will be needed. As for the spacing in the wire will depend on what you are trying to keep in or out of a fenced-in area.

No climb fencing is generally attached to wooden posts but can be fixed to T-posts as well. When used with larger livestock and most popular with horses, there will be a wooden board places on the top of the no-climb wire between each post.

This is to prevent the horses from rubbing on the wire and bending it. No climb fencing is a great choice since it is very secure just by design. As long as the animal cannot fit through the spaces, and it is securely attached to the fence posts, there is minimal chance for them to get out.

Maintenance on no climb can be fairly minimal. The biggest core will be weed-whacking the tall grass on either side of the fence. This is because the no-climb fencing goes right to the ground, and a mower cannot get underneath and only so close to the fencing. This makes it a weed eater job, and unfortunately, because of the wire, it will tend to eat up the twine in the weed eater. If you were to choose to put wood boards on the top, the maintenance would be similar to that of wood fencing replace or repair on an as-needed basis. The one fall back is this fencing is not an ideal choice in wooded areas. This is because the no-climb fencing, once it is damaged, tends to be a total loss and replacement. For example, if a tree was to fall on the fence and crush it many times, that section will not be able to be straightened out and put back up. Many times the affected area has to be cut out and replaced with a new section. This can make the fence costly to fix, and if the possibility of trees falling on the fence is a common problem, this may not be the most cost-effective choice.

When it comes to fencing, I have learned it is an art to choosing the right one for you and to perfecting putting it in. I have also come to the realization that each year I get smarter, and my fence gets better. While these are just a few of the basic options, they are the bread and butter of the fencing. The most important thing to keep in mind is what you are keeping in or keeping out, and how strong the fence needs to be, to be considered safe.



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