

Fence designs accommodate wildlife but keep livestock in

By Rory Karhu

An increasing number of properties are being developed across the state, and more wildlife is being affected. As we think about keeping domestic livestock in, how do we accommodate wildlife?

1 Permanent power fence is a great fence type for allowing elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, and moose movement while still containing cattle, bison, or horses. The design shown at right is a three-wire, high-tensile power fence with wire spacing from the ground up of 22, 32, and 42 inches. The middle wire is grounded while the top and bottom wires are electrically charged. As with any fence, build it right the first time, to avoid costly maintenance in the future.

To obtain more information about research specific to this fence design, logon to www.wy.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/rangemgt/range.html.

In addition, construction drawings and specifications can be found at [http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/WY/Fence_\(382\)_Specification_Guide_Sheet_\(Permanent_Power\).pdf](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/WY/Fence_(382)_Specification_Guide_Sheet_(Permanent_Power).pdf).

Also, see "Portable Fencing" in the Spring 2006 *Barnyards&Backyards* available at <http://barnyardstobackyards.com/Articles/portable%20fencing%20spring%202006.pdf>.

2 Traditional buck and pole or buck and rail fences can be relatively easy for big game species to navigate providing the top rail is no more than 42 inches in height and the spacing between poles is 12 inches or more.



A three-wire, high-tensile power fence.

3 This is a wildlife-friendly design that works well for containing domestic livestock while still allowing reasonable passage by big game species. The wire spacing from the ground up is 16, 23, 30, and 42 inches. The bottom wire is smooth while the remaining three wires are barbed. The smooth bottom wire is high enough to allow young and some adult big game animals to crawl under. The 42-inch top wire height allows deer, elk, and moose to jump over, and the 12-inch spacing between the top two wires minimizes entanglement, especially for deer.

4 Pole-topped fences can be excellent for allowing big game movement. They are especially good for areas with significant elk migration because the animals will seek out these fences for crossing. Pole-topped fences can be excellent for allowing big game movement because the pole increases visibility and reduces the risk of leg entanglement when an animal jumps the fence.

The top of the pole should be less than 42 inches, and the bottom wire should be smooth and 16 inches above ground. More details and discussion about this fence and other wildlife friendly designs can be found at <http://gf.state.wy.us/downloads/pdf/habitat/Bulletin%20No.%2053.pdf>.

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Traditional buck and pole design.



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A pole-topped fence allows big game movement.



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This high-tension fence is similar to No. 1 but is not electrified.

5 This high-tension fence uses the same high-tensile wire used on power fences, but the wires are not electrified. The idea behind this fence is to create a physical barrier at the height where most of the pressure will be exerted by the contained livestock. This is a relatively new design that has not been used much in Wyoming but is showing a lot of promise for containing livestock while allowing big game to pass.

The wire spacing from the ground up is 16, 20, 24, 28, 32, and 42 inches.