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ask Sam

question

Dear Sam,

I run a few cows on a quarter section on the plains with a lot of free-range pronghorn. I've heard there are ways to construct barbed wire fence that are more wildlife friendly to allow these animals safe passage. What constitutes a wildlife friendly fence in Wyoming?

– Donna, Evansville

Dear Donna,

In general, woven wire (coarse-wire mesh, also called "sheep fence") fences are considered to be most problematic, and woven wire topped with barbed wire even more so. Pronghorn and other smaller animals are unable to pass under the fence. Classic four- or five-strand barbed wire fences can also be a problem if the bottom wire is too low or the top wire too high. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department recently published a guide called *A Landowner's Guide to Fences and Wildlife: Practical Tips to Make Your Fences Wildlife Friendly* (available at <http://bit.ly/wildfence>). There are additional considerations for different types of wildlife and topography, but a generic wildlife friendly fence for cattle would have the following: a top wire no higher than 42 inches high; 12 inches of separation between the top two wires to prevent tangling legs between wires; a bottom wire, preferably smooth, at least 16 inches above the ground; no vertical stays and posts at about 16-foot spacing. This should allow pronghorn to move under and deer and elk to jump over without tangling their feet in the wires.

– Sam



answer



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