



FENCING WILDLIFE OUT OF HAY STACKYARDS

Put the crunch on wildlife munch



Elk dine on hay bales.



Deer with a view graze on bales.



A fence frustrates these elk.

Scott Cotton

A well-designed and maintained fence around a hay stackyard will help protect your investment, limit hassle, headache, and keep pesky wildlife where they belong – outside your stackyard.

Wildlife will work harder to get access to stored forage resources anytime there is drought, insufficient forage on the landscape, or thick snow cover. Wildlife seek the best forage year-round and, if your meadows or stacks are the best, they will come.

Many producers who operate in areas with dense wildlife populations have always tried to reduce wildlife consumption of expensive, stored forage. These efforts included working alone or with wildlife management agencies to provide alternative wildlife feed, deterring wildlife from

the storage areas, or constructing barriers to keep wildlife out of and off haystacks. Now that most hay producers move hay to centralized yards for storage, feeding, and shipping, hay is easier to protect.

Prevention

Managing pastures effectively to maintain good condition can reduce the pressure of wildlife on haystacks as can developing planned wildlife food plots a significant distance from hay storage areas. Locating stackyards near human and pet activity provides additional (but not total) deterrent to wildlife pressure on haystacks. Centralized storage of hay provides the most inexpensive cost for erecting wildlife fencing but generates additional fuel and haulage costs for moving the hay to the storage area.

Animal Movement

Antelope will jump short fences and crawl through or under others. A well-constructed panel fence or woven wire fence that touches the ground will deter most antelope.

Deer and elk usually jump fences to get access but can also extend their reach and hay consumption by rearing up on solid barriers to reach over. This makes protecting a haystack more difficult.

Specific fence design diagrams are available in several formats. For more information, contact your local University of Wyoming Extension office or the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The department encourages landowners with questions on ways to prevent damage from wildlife to contact their local game wardens or regional offices.

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ELK PANEL CHOICE

Eight-foot-tall “elk” panels around stacks (similar to a large shipping pallet) were used between 1960 and 2000 in the western states, often with a cost-share from game and fish management agencies. Even with the panels, the agencies had to reduce wildlife populations at times to control damage.

Using large wooden panels requires time-consuming placement and removal each year in addition to maintaining and repairing the panels damaged by wildlife. Each 8-foot x 8-foot panel can cost about \$130. About 60 panels are required to protect 100 tons of hay (\$3,600 = \$36/ton) and require 64 man hours to erect and take down each year.



WOVEN WIRE OPTION

Woven wire fences 72-96 inches tall usually deter deer and elk from entering a haystack. To enclose a 100-foot x 200-foot stackyard with 96-inch-tall woven fence requires 600 feet of 96-inch wire, 70-80 ten-foot posts (6-8 inches diameter), and a variety of hardware that can be easily accessed and re-used. Estimated cost for such a yard (not including labor) is approximately:

- Using 10-foot wooden posts at corners, galvanized line posts, and plastic mesh will cost about \$2,000 plus labor for a 100-foot x 200-foot stackyard. Plastic mesh fences have about a three-year life expectancy with elk and five years with deer.
- Using 10-foot wooden corners, 80 line posts, and two rolls of 96-inch game fence will run about \$2,218 plus labor and has a 10-year elk and 15-year deer life expectancy for a 100-foot x 200-foot yard.



ELECTRIC ALTERNATIVE

Electric fencing is another option – a 72-96 inches tall, high-voltage (3,500-7,500 volt) electric fence with five to seven conductors. Research suggests placing marker strips of flags along the wires for easy visibility. Often, wildlife hair is dry enough to limit the “zap” of a simple electric stock fence.

In some cases, using an electric stock fence as short as 42 inches has been a strong deterrent to wildlife by rubbing peanut butter along the top wire. Deer and elk are drawn to the smell and lick the wire providing a shock and making a lasting mental impression. This method is usually only effective when there is some available forage outside the fence.

High tensile electric fence (eight strands) using a 10 joule (7.5KW) charger, ground rods, fiberglass line posts, and 10-foot wooden corner posts would cost approximately \$1,715 for the stackyard. This fence type is easily repaired and has a life expectancy of 10-15 years if maintained. A central location near buildings may provide access to 110-volt power for an electric fence charger, which are stronger and more consistent than battery or solar/battery types of chargers.