USE SNOW FENCES TO

By Rex Lockman

Living snow fences are wonderful for controlling drifting snow and lowering energy costs for houses and buildings exposed to Wyoming's ferocious winds.

Unfortunately, living snow fences can sometimes take years to establish. Those with new construction or new roads may need immediate help in controlling snowdrifts in the upcoming winter and must consider man-made options. Man-made fencing can also give your new living snow fence a boost by protecting it and providing springtime moisture in the form of melting snow that it collects.

Slatted wood and plastic snow fences are the two basic types commonly used for drift control; both are usually 4 feet tall and 50-percent porous, that is, half of the fence's broad area is open space.

In the following figures, fetch distance is the distance upwind to anything that will stop/trap snow (the area from which snow is gathered). A longer fetch distance allows more snow to be carried by the wind to the snow fence thus creating a bigger drift downwind from the snow fence. This measurement will help decide how far away a snow fence needs to be placed from the area to be protected – a critically important consideration to avoid drifting in roads, homes, and outbuildings.

Figure 1

Wood looks better and lasts longer than plastic but is more expensive.

Figure 2

Drifting snow can cause problems on driveways and around houses or barns. This photo shows how snow has drifted around the downwind side of the barn. If a snow fence had been properly placed upwind of the barn, most of this drifting could have been avoided.

Figure 3

In this schematic, H refers to the height of the snow fence being used. Most are 4-foot tall and 50-percent porous when bought from a store. As seen in this diagram, a 4-foot fence would have to be placed 136 feet (34 times 4) from the area to be protected. This is based on a 50-percent porous fence and an unlimited fetch distance. In most situations, a 4-foot snow fence can be placed closer due to shorter fetch distances, although 60 feet would probably be the closest it should be placed to the area to be protected from drifting, such as a road. The diagram also shows that a majority of the snow is caught in the first 60 feet downwind for a 4-foot tall fence.

Figure 4

Here you can see the snowdrift cast out 45 feet. This is a 4-foot slatted wood snow fence so H is 4 feet. There is nothing to stop the snow upwind of this fence. This photo was taken from the road; notice that the fence is too close to the road – about 30 feet.

Figure 5

This fence is running north and south. This storm came out of the northwest, and the photo shows the snow drifting across the road. This fence is about 30 feet from the road, which is too close. The wind blew the snow down the fence and across the road. Placing the fence 60 feet from the road would have significantly reduced drifting across the road. Again, this is a 4-foot slatted snow fence so H would equal 4 feet.

The above are only guidelines; solutions for problem areas will be shaped by individual site considerations and

CONTROL DRIFTING SNOW

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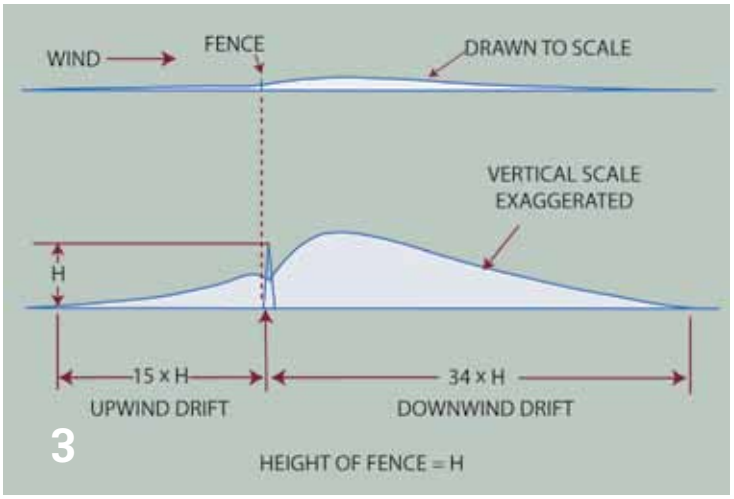

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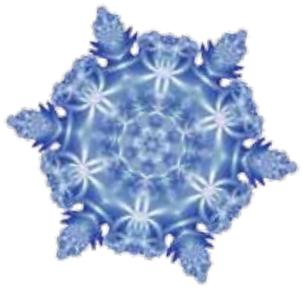
the prevailing wind direction of winter storms.

Personnel at local Natural Resources Conservation Service offices (www.wy.nrcs.usda.gov) and conservation districts (www.conservewy.com) can help landowners properly site a snow fence.

Information about windbreaks is also available on the barnyardsandbackyards.com Web site by clicking on the "Resources" link and going to "Landscaping." The articles, "Developing a plan for windbreak has future payoff" and "Windbreaks for Wyoming," are under "Trees & Shrubs."



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