

GOT DEER? ELK? ANTELOPE? MOOSE? LIVESTOCK? GOT FENCES?

LANDOWNERS HAVE MANY OPTIONS TO REDUCE WILDLIFE DAMAGE TO FENCES AND HELP THE ANIMALS, TOO

Proper fencing on a small acreage can keep wildlife out or let them pass through, all while reducing the potential for damage to a fence or animal.

Considering installing a new fence or replacing an old one? Here are some questions to get you started:

1. What job do you need the fence to do? Livestock fences can either keep stock in or out of a property, and a boundary fence marks the edge of a property. If the fence you have in mind is simply a boundary fence, is there another way to mark the property to show neighbors or others they are crossing that boundary?

2. Is a current fence in good condition or dilapidated to the point it isn't really doing its job? Fences in poor condition often pose bigger hazards to wildlife than those in good shape. Repair, replacement, or removal should be considered if a fence is no longer containing livestock or pets.

3. If necessary, what TYPE of fence is it? Which fence type best fits your needs? Fences for horses or cattle will differ from fences for sheep or goats, and wildlife will interact differently with each. Several publications can help you decide what fence style best

fits your needs and reduce risks to wildlife. *A Wyoming Landowner's Handbook to Fences and Wildlife – Practical Tips for Fencing with Wildlife in Mind* is one of the most comprehensive and is available online at bit.ly/wildlifefencing.

4. Is the fence needed all year? Consider the season of use for the fence (summer, winter, spring, fall, or year-round) – if there are times the fence isn't needed to keep your domesticated animals in (or other folk's critters out), then can the fence be lowered, or gates left open to allow wildlife to move more freely past the fence line?

If you need the fences you have, but they could be modified, moved, or replaced with different styles of fence that meet your needs and allow better wildlife passage, there are many ways to make that happen. However, even then the costs may be tough to handle, especially if there is a lot of fence.

Several agencies and conservation groups offer cost-share assistance to help offset the burden of those costs. There might even be opportunities for volunteer labor, especially if you have an old fence that needs removed and you just don't have the time to get it done!

Marking fences

Most wildlife species are slow to adapt to fences on the landscape. Whether a simple picket fence around a house in town, a 3-strand pasture fence in the middle of the sagebrush steppe or prairies, or a woven-wire/barbed wire fence along highways, wildlife seem to get into trouble crossing over or under fences.

Once a fence type chosen that is as friendly to wildlife as a fence can be, marking fences can further help reduce wildlife entanglements and collisions. Marking fences, especially barbed-wire fences, greatly



increases their visibility to wildlife, reducing the risk of animals running or flying into the fence.

Most wildlife learn to navigate over or under fences they encounter daily, but if they get flushed by passing vehicles, people, predators, or are migrating, they are often at higher risk of colliding with or becoming entangled in fences because they may not be able to see the fences while moving quickly toward them. It is also useful to think about more than big game animals when considering fencing. Marking fences can help protect sage grouse and other ground-dwelling birds that flush from cover and often rarely get more than a few feet above ground while flying several hundred yards or more.

Many types of fence markers

Wooden posts and top rails – Using wooden posts instead of steel posts is usually effective at reducing wildlife collisions with fences, since wooden posts are more visible at greater distances. Replacing the top wire of any fence with a horizontal wooden pole or rail is very effective in areas of thick vegetation such as shrubs and trees. Elk, deer, and moose are better able to see and effectively jump over fences with wooden top rails. Use

of pole-top fencing is expensive and is not recommended for long stretches of fence but is most effective in areas of high wildlife use, such as along creeks, hilltops, known crossing or trailing locations, etc. Using tubing or hoses on the top wire, similar to conduit used in electrical wiring, is an alternative to wooden top rails.

Sage grouse fence markers – Marking barbed-wire fences with strips of plastic (usually a 3- to 4-inch long strip of vinyl siding “J” channel) attached to the top wire or wires about every 3 to 4 feet has proven effective at reducing the risks to greater sage-grouse. These markers have been shown to reduce sage grouse collisions with high-risk fences by as much as 83 percent (high-risk fences are those near sage grouse leks or other high-use areas such as winter habitats and wet meadows or riparian areas in summer).

The following links will lead you to material from many different organizations that provide details about how to make, purchase, and install a variety of plastic or vinyl markers to help reduce the risks fences pose to greater sage-grouse and other wildlife. (These links can also be found on barnyardsandbackyards.com on our “Buildings/Fencing/Snow Control” page.)

Plastic strips on wire fences have been shown to reduce sage grouse collisions by as much as 83 percent.



- bit.ly/fencemarkers
- bit.ly/sagegrousemarkers
- bit.ly/highriskfencemarking
- bit.ly/sagegrousefencemarker

Fladry – A different kind of fence marking, when combined with other techniques, can help reduce wolf attacks on livestock in small areas such as calving pastures. Fladry, a non-lethal deterrent placed around livestock specifically to deter predation by wolves, consists of a rope hung along the top of a fence with red flagging tied onto it at intervals. The system was developed in Europe as a way to drive and capture wolves, which are inherently risk-averse and reluctant to cross under unknown objects. It is not recommended for mountain lions, bears, or other potential predators.

Turbo-fladry – outfitting electric fencing with fladry – provides an added repulsive shock to wolves bold enough to test it, a negative reinforcement that makes this deterrent an aversive conditioning tool as well. Fladry and turbo-fladry will deter wolves from entering smaller areas, such as calving pastures, for short periods of time (two to eight weeks).

All landowners experienced with their use report they are short-term techniques, requiring attention and maintenance, and not well-suited to large acreages (greater than 50-100 acres). The following link will direct you to a newly published guidebook to help landowners reduce conflicts with grizzly bears, wolves, and elk, and includes a section detailing the use of fladry: bit.ly/reducewildlifeconflict.

Remember – there really is no such thing as a completely wildlife-friendly fence, but some fences are definitely easier for wildlife to pass through than others! Adding markers to any fence will likely further reduce the risk of wildlife entanglement and collisions with the fence.

If you still have fencing questions, please call any regional office of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department or your local game warden or wildlife biologist.

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