

Volume 14, Number 3
May-June 2009

A voluntary
partnership
with private
landowners

IN THIS ISSUE:

Fence Fixes

Are you making these common fencing mistakes?

Meet The Winner

A South Carolina family has earned the top environmental stewardship award.

Web Savvy

Grazing resources are at your fingertips online.

Mark Your Calendar

Summer is filling up with several upcoming grazing events.

Seedbed Prep

A basketball can be useful in the field.

Chair's Corner

Welcome to our newest Steering Committee member.

Cover Photo Courtesy of USDA
- NRCS



Fixing Fencing Mistakes

Summer grazing means fence fixing season as well. Here are tips to common mistakes made in using high-tensile fencing.

Source: BEEF Magazine

What's the most common mistake made in fencing? Jim Gerrish, of American GrazingLands Service LLC in May, ID, and Merle Mohr, Gallagher territory manager based in South Dakota, both say whether it's barbed wire, high-tensile or woven wire fencing corner posts often aren't installed properly.

"I see a whole lot of fences that are basically intact and the corners are already falling apart," Gerrish says. Gerrish says this is often because undersized posts are used and the corner posts are not set deep enough, particularly in sandy or other soft soils. A guideline he follows: "The depth in the ground should be equal to, or greater than, the height of the top wire."

For example, if the top wire on the fence is 42 in. high, there should be at least 42 in. of post in the ground.

Post diameter depends on the strength of the fence. Gerrish says the lightest-duty fence, such as a 1- or 2-wire high-tensile pasture subdivision fence, would only need a 4- to 5-in.-diameter post. A 5-strand barbed wire fence, or 5- or 6-strand high-tensile fence, would use a 6- to 7-in.-diameter post. And for net wire fences, Gerrish prefers an 8-in.-diameter post.

Mohr adds, "A 10-ft. brace is the ultimate in making corner posts stay in the ground." He favors a "floating diagonal" bracing system, in which the angle brace is a 4-in. by 10-ft. post notched a half-inch into the main corner post. The other end is set on top of the ground opposite of the corner post.

Other Common Mistakes

Post spacing – "We always tell people they're using way too many posts," Mohr remarks. The practice stems from people's experience with barbed wire, he says, where the rule of thumb was 1 post spaced every rod length (16.5 ft.). In an electric-fencing system, posts can be spaced farther apart. Mohr spaces posts 80-100 ft. apart, about 50 posts/mile.

The right sized energizer – Undersized energizers are another common mistake, Gerrish says. His guideline: 1 joule of output per mile of fence, regardless of how many strands of wire.

Grounding – Gerrish uses the rule of thumb: 3 ft. of ground rods per joule of energizer output. So if the fence is using a 6-joule energizer, it would *(continued on page 2)*

GLCI News • 11734 Weisman Rd. • Whitewood, SD 57793

call for 18 ft. of ground rods. “Typically this would be three, 6-ft. ground rods, spaced at least 10 ft. apart,” Gerrish explains. Mohr points out that most people will put in three ground rods near the energizer. He encourages people to space ground rods throughout the whole network of fencing. It’s especially necessary if the average rainfall of the fenced area is less than ideal for proper grounding.

Wildlife friendly – “When dealing with big game like elk and moose, rather than trying to build a fence physically strong enough to stop them, build a fence that’s flexible enough to give with their movements,” Gerrish says.

South Carolina Angus Breeder Wins Environmental Stewardship Title



Yon Family Farms of Ridge Spring, SC, was named the national Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) winner during an award ceremony Jan. 29 at the 2009 Cattle Industry Convention in Phoenix, AZ.

Established in 1996, the operation is family-owned and operated by Kevin and Lydia Yon and their three children. The farm includes 1,500 acres of cropland, hay and pastureland for the family’s diversified Angus seedstock operation. The farm also earns income from the sale of seed and feed for livestock, freezer beef, and sweet corn sales.

Partnering with USDA-NRCS and the Saluda Soil and Water Conservation District, the Yon’s have utilized technical and financial assistance to install practices and easement through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Forestry Incentives Program (FIP), Conservation Security Program (CSP), and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). Through these programs, the Yons have implemented no-till practices, rotational crop planting sequences, nutrient and pest management, and forage and soil sampling.

Over the years, they have installed 28 water troughs, 55,352 feet of cross-fencing, and 34,616 square feet of heavy materials to protect from erosion. These efforts have allowed the operation to become economically sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Lydia Yon stated that they recognize the need to take care of the soil in order to produce quality grass – and ultimately quality beef.

Yon Family Farms is also passionate about informing and educating others about conservation and the beef industry. They regularly host producer tours, educational studies, conservation programs and internship programs.

The annual award program is administered by the National Cattlemen’s Foundation and sponsored by Dow AgroSciences L.L.C., USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. In addition to the Yon family, six regional award winners were recognized for their commitment to conservation. They included:

- Sennett Cattle Co, Waynetown, Indiana
- Guge Family Farm, Estherville, Iowa
- Bradley 3 Ranch, Memphis, Texas
- Veseth Cattle Co, Malta, Montana
- Babacomari Ranch, Sonoita, Arizona
- Hovde Ranch, Alexander, North Dakota

For more information about the Annual Environmental Stewardship Award program, visit <http://www.environmental-stewardship.org/>.



On the Web

Grazing on YouTube – Livestock consultant Kathy Voth has earned attention for several years for her research on teaching cows to eat weeds. Now, Voth has posted several videos on the YouTube site so others can watch and learn how to train their cows to eat weeds. Voth even includes a “music” video showing work she did this summer in Montana teaching cows to eat Canada thistle. She also includes a review of all the weeds she has trained cows to eat since developing the process in 2004. There are also three interview videos with producers describing how the training process worked for them. View the videos at Voth’s YouTube channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/kathyvoth>. For more about Voth’s work visit her website at <http://www.livestockforlandscapes.com>.

Aerial Maps Free Online – Ever wish you had a good aerial photo of your property? The Web can help. Free maps of satellite imagery can be downloaded from the Web and utilized for land management purposes. The sites included: www.earth.google.com, www.esri.com and Web Soil Survey at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>. The databases on these sites allow you to search by section designations to create customizable maps and soils information.

Proceedings from the recent 2009 Heart of America Grazing Conference in Columbus, IN, are now available online. Topics covered in the 64-page, pdf edition include getting started in management-intensive grazing, marketing farm-raised products, economic flexibility in raising stockers and replacement dairy heifers, alternative forages in grazing operations and more. Go to www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/forages.

Upcoming Grazing Events

The annual Nebraska Grazing Conference will be August 11-12, at the Holiday Inn, Kearney, NE. Allan Nation, publisher of the *The Stockman Grass Farmer*, will be the kick-off speaker for the event. Additional topics to be discussed will include beginner farmer programs, winter grazing supplementation strategies, extended grazing in heifer development systems, invasive species control, and pasture leases.

During the second day of the conference Bob Budd with the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust will speak about the impacts of grazing conservation practices on livestock and wildlife. Rick Danvir, Deseret Land & Livestock, Woodruff, UT, will also share his perspective on why ranchers should manage for wildlife.

Several other speakers – including producers from Nebraska will be featured on the program. Allan Nation will conclude the event by discussing grass-finished production and marketing.

For more information contact the Center for Grassland Studies, 402-472-4101, or visit <http://www.grassland.unl.edu/grazeconf.htm>.

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition (SDGC) will team up with the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition on July 21-22 to host a joint bus tour of ranches in both South Dakota and Nebraska. The tour will headquarter out of Yankton, SD. Additionally, the SDGC will host their annual Grazing School to be held at Oacoma, SD Sept. 14-16. This is a hands-on two-day event that offers a review of the principles of rangeland management. For more details contact Kyle Schell at 605-688-6623 or kyle.schell@sdstate.edu.

Additional Events

June 21-23 -- American Forage & Grassland Council Annual Conference, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI. Call 800-944-2342 or email info@afgc.org.

July 29-30 -- U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center Getting More From Forages Conference, Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, Madison, WI. Visit www.dfrc.ars.usda.gov/forages for more details.

Sept. 17-19 -- National Hay Association Convention, Cadillac Jack's Gaming Resort, Deadwood, SD. Contact Don Kieffer at 800-707-0014 or visit www.nationalhay.org.

Sept. 29-Oct. 3 -- World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI. Visit www.worlddairyexpo.com.

Dec. 13-16 -- 4th National Conference on Grazing Lands, Reno, NV. See www.glci.org for more information.

Planting Grasses or Alfalfa? Make Sure The Seedbed Is Firm

University of Nebraska Extension forage specialist Bruce Anderson issues this reminder for the spring season: check to see if your seedbed is firm before planting alfalfa or grass.

He recommends walking across the field and looking back at your footprints. Do you sink in more deeply than the soles of your shoes or boots? If so, your seedbed may be too soft.

Another technique is to bring a basketball to the field. Try to dribble the basketball in your field. It should be easy to bounce that basketball on a firm seedbed. If you can't bounce the ball easily, don't plant yet. Firm that seedbed even more with a flat harrow, a roller, or maybe even irrigate.

Why so much effort for a seedbed? Well, when small seeds germinate their first roots must come into immediate contact with moisture and nutrients in the soil if those seedlings are to survive and grow rapidly. Loose seedbeds can have up to 50% dead airspace in the seeding zone. First roots that emerge into that dead airspace often do not live, and your stand will suffer. A firm seedbed reduces this dead airspace, which helps you get thicker stands that develop more rapidly.

Wyoming Groups Unveil "Thank a Rancher" Billboard, Ad Campaign

This spring three new billboards were put up along Wyoming's roads, expressing appreciation for the state's ranchers and the role they play in Wyoming open space and conservation efforts. The billboards proclaim: "Wyoming's Open, Thank a Rancher."

The intent is to raise awareness of how ranchers help to conserve Wyoming's wide open spaces, abundant wildlife and unparalleled recreation opportunities, and is the idea initiated by a group of sportsmen, conservation and outdoor organizations, uniting to articulate a shared desire to recognize the importance of agriculture in land protection, and the need to work together to maintain what is unique about Wyoming.

The group – working in conjunction with the Wyoming Stockgrowers Agricultural Land Trust - includes Audubon Wyoming, Trout Unlimited, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy, and is committed to preserve Wyoming's open landscapes, healthy wildlife populations, and iconic views.

"This is a worthwhile effort because it recognizes the importance of agriculture and ranching in maintaining our open spaces and conserving wildlife habitat," said Governor Dave Freudenthal, about the group's efforts in a press statement.

"Wyoming still has what so many other places have failed to protect. We recognize that our ranchers and farmers are important caretakers of our wildlife habitat and open spaces," says Brian Rutledge, Executive Director of Audubon in Wyoming. "The stewardship and cultural values embodied by the ranching community are critical in preserving what Wyoming values."



Chair's Corner

The summer grazing season is upon us. The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative is proud of the work taking place in several states through the grassroots efforts of state coalitions. Look for the events they host from pasture walks and ranch tours to range camps and speakers. It's a great opportunity to fine tune your land management practices and enhance your conservation goals.

The National GLCI Steering Committee welcomes Richard McElhaney of Hookstown, Pennsylvania, aboard as a producer representative from the American Farm Bureau Federation. He fills the position previously held by Steve Kouplen from Oklahoma. The McElhaney family is internationally recognized for the Shorthorn breeding stock and club calves they have raised for several decades. Richard has covered several of his highly erodible soils from cropland to forage and today incorporates rotational grazing and environmental conservation practices on their farm. McElhaney Stock Farm was one of seven regional winners of the NCBA's Environmental Stewardship Award in 2004.

We also extend congratulations to Krysta Harden, chief executive officer of the National Association of Conservation Districts – one of GLCI's partners. President Barack Obama has nominated Harden as USDA's Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations.

Many of you are also aware that Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack has named Dave White as chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). White is a career conservationist with NRCS. He has provided technical and management expertise in Missouri, South Carolina, Washington, D.C. and Montana, where he served as State Conservationist from 2002 to 2008.

I was in DC in March and had a chance to stop in and congratulate the new chief in person (see photo above.) GLCI looks forward to our continued partnership with NRCS across the country.

Have a great summer!
Bob Drake, Oklahoma
GLCI Chair



New NRCS Chief Dave White with Bob Drake.

To have your GLCI activities or upcoming events highlighted in this newsletter, contact Kindra Gordon at phone 605-722-7699 or kindras@gordonresources.com.

GLCI News 11734 Weisman Rd.
Whitewood, SD 57783

Contact these affiliated organizations:

**American Farm
Bureau Federation**
(202) 484-3608

**American Forage and
Grassland Council**
Dana Tucker
(800) 944-2342

**American Sheep
Industry**
Peter Orwick
(303) 771-3500

Dairy Industry
Howard Straub
(517) 323-6575

**National Association of
Conservation Districts**
Krysta Harden
(202) 547-6233

**National Cattlemen's
Beef Association**
Tamara Thies
(202) 347-0228

National Farmers Union
Chris Schepis
(202) 554-1600

**Society for Range
Management**
Jason Campbell
(303) 986-3309

**Soil and Water
Conservation Society**
Craig Cox
(515) 289-2331, ext 13

Visit the GLCI homepage at <http://www.glci.org>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.