



Howdy, welcome to Cowboy Corner. Since the last "Cowboy Corner" the rains have blessed us even more. Not too much, but enough to bring the pastures and hay fields back in to forage production. The hay shortage of the spring is easing as supply increases with the current crop. Might even make a fall cutting. Thank you Lord. We'll always take an inch of rain and a new calf.

Last month I wrote about electric fences in general and particularly about posts. Well, this go-round is about wire. Using a smooth or single strand wire for the "hot" or electrified portion of the fence was recommended, and the "hot" wire should be the top wire. Again, top wire spacing at 30" for a single wire fence and 36" for a two or three wire fence has worked for us. Horses are easily held in a temporary "grazing cell" with a single wire and two wires make a more permanent fence. Cattle, particularly yearlings, need three wire fences, as mentioned last month.

Electric fence wire is available in a twisted version, or tape, however, single strand is my preference due to cost, durability and strength. Galvanized steel electric fence wire comes in three sizes 17, 14, and 12 1/2 gauge. The gauge number refers to the wire diameter and the higher the number the smaller the wire. therefore, 17 gauge is smaller than 12 1/2 gauge.

Over the years, I have used a lot of 17-gauge wire for temporary horse pasture. The wire comes 1/4 mile or 1/2 mile to the spool, is easy to work with, and affordable. My usage is for rye grass pasture rotation in winter. When the rye grass season

is over in April, I just dismantle the fence by rolling the fence up on an electric extension cord holder and pulling the plastic pipe covered "T" posts. Electric extension cord holders are made to hold 150 feet of 16 gauge, three wire extension cord and are available at hardware stores for about a dollar. The 17 gauge wire is also

easy to splice and tie off at fence ends; however, the trade-off is strength. I don't use 17 gauge wire with cattle.

For cattle, 14 gauge wire is a better choice, whether for temporary or permanent fence. Spools are also available in 1/4 or 1/2 mile lengths and the wire is easy to work with. Rewinding can also be done on a cord holder or large spool.

If a permanent electrified fence is desired then 12 1/2 gauge high tensile wire should be used. The wire is strong and available in 4000' coils. The trade-off is stiffness. The wire cannot be spliced, or end loops made in the same manner as with 17 or 14 gauge. The recommendation for splicing or looping is to use properly sized sleeves installed with a crimping tool.

Last year, one of the landowners I lease pasture from gave me several spools of pre-used high tensile 12 1/2 gauge wire. Now I've never been known to "look a gift horse in the mouth". After loading several coils of this high tensile wire on my fence repair trailer, I began trying to recall the information presented by the wire manufacturer at a seminar I attended last year.

Now, folks this wire is stiff and strong. To uncoil, put the coil of wire on the truck tail gate, and then put a five gallon bucket in the middle of the coil, with one helper standing in the bucket and the other helper watching the wire uncoil as the truck slowly moves. A coil wire winding and unwinding tool is available, and called a "Spinning Jenny" but falls in the same category as a crimping tool. After unwinding, stretching the wire is next, and will require a "ratchet-type" fence stretcher, or come-along with a wire clamp or "grabber". The wire must be insulated from the corner post, and my preference is the porcelain "donut-shaped" insulator. After looping the fence wire around the insulator, I secure the two wires that make the loop with 1/16" or 1/8" cable clamps substituted for crimped sleeves. Be sure to use two or three cable clamps and really tighten the cable clamp nuts. If a different insulator than the "donut" is used, forming the end loop around a 1/8" wire rope thimble really helps slippage of the wire loop. Splicing is the same as looping, just be sure to use several cable clamps. Good luck and be careful.

Happy Trails!

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