

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM27 – Wildlife-friendly fencing



Enhancement Description

This enhancement involves the use of wildlife-friendly fencing techniques that allow free passage of daily wildlife movement and seasonal migration; and/or increase visibility to prevent entanglement and mortality.

Land Use Applicability:

Cropland, Pastureland, Rangeland and Forestland

Benefits

Fencing used to define property boundaries and contain livestock creates barriers and traps to wildlife movement, fragments habitats and separate herds. Improper fence design results in injury and death through entanglement and collision. Wildlife-friendly fencing techniques allow for safe passage and increase fence visibility improving wildlife habitat, granting access to food, shelter and water.

Criteria

One or more of the following wildlife-friendly fencing techniques will be implemented to accommodate targeted wildlife species. The minimum amount of fence treated must be equal to or greater than the length of 20% of the total existing permanent fence.

- 1) Improve Passage through New Fence: New fence planned for installation will meet NRCS state standards for wildlife-friendly fence for height, wire spacing and type, etc.;
- 2) Improve Passage through Existing Fence: Existing fence will be retrofitted, adjusted, or replaced to meet NRCS state standards for wildlife-friendly fence for height, wire spacing and type, etc., and/or openings and crossings will be created to facilitate wildlife movement. If fence is no longer needed, removal is also acceptable. Methods used to create openings or crossing include, but are not limited to:
 1. Lay-down fence
 2. Seasonal electric fence
 3. Adjustable wire fence
 4. Underpass fence with raised wire
 5. Pole top fence;



- 3) Improve visibility of new or existing fences in wildlife travel corridors or other high-risk areas for fence collisions using durable flagging, vinyl markers, PVC pipe or other similar materials that will meet NRCS state standards for spacing, interval and size. Fences that often present a high risk for collision or entanglement are those fences located in frequently travelled areas, such as, fences near water, near breeding grounds (e.g., grouse leks), or in corridors between seasonal habitats. A good example of improving visibility for prairie grouse (e.g. prairie chickens, sage grouse, etc.) in rangeland can be found at:
www.suttoncenter.org/pages/fence_marking_instructions

NOTE: If no state criteria exist follow criteria in Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks publication “A Landowner’s Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences”.

Documentation Requirements

1. Identify type(s) of wildlife-friendly fencing techniques used
2. Location on a map showing where wildlife-friendly fencing techniques used
3. Photograph each wildlife-friendly fencing techniques used

Michigan Supplement

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Fencing may be necessary to keep livestock in, or out of your property, but fencing may cause problems for wildlife that need to move freely to escape predators, to forage for food, or to find a mate.

In Michigan, The Wildlife Conservation Order under Act 256 of the Public Acts of 1988 mandates passage for wildlife in known travel lanes shall be accommodated using perimeter fencing less than 52 inches in height and the bottom of the fence is spaced at least 4-inches above the ground. Alternatively, constructing passage areas 40 feet wide, 52 inches or less in height, and no more than 660 feet from the next passage will allow wildlife passage. This order does not apply to an exclusion structure which does not kill, harm, capture, trap, or collect animals and which is constructed to deter or prevent damage by wild animals to private property, including but not limited to fences to protect livestock, poultry, and other birds, including captive-reared game birds; farm crops; orchards; and gardens. A Michigan Department of Natural Resources permit is needed when constructing fence for temporary enclosure of wild, free-ranging deer, elk, bear, or moose.

Wildlife friendly fence allows wild animals free passage, is easier to construct, and is less expensive than many other types of fence. If your

property is already fenced, it may be possible to convert the old fence without much expense or labor. If you are fencing your property for the first time, please consider the safety of your wildlife neighbors.

Types of fences that cause problems for wildlife include fences that:

- are too high to jump;
- are too low to crawl under;
- have loose wires;
- have wires spaced too closely
- are together;
- are difficult for fleeing animals or birds to see; or
- create a complete barrier.

When you design your fence, consider:

- purpose of the fence;
- topography – hills, gullies, streams and wetlands;
- species of wildlife present daily or seasonal wildlife movements in the area;
- presence of water, food and cover for wildlife;
- Presence of young animals.

The placement of fences is just as important as the type of fence used.

Fencing need not restrict wildlife movement everywhere on your property. Wherever possible, design your fence to provide wildlife free travel to important habitats and corridors, as well as access to water. Wetlands and riparian habitats are especially important for all wildlife.

Fence and Crossing Placement

Watch for daily and seasonal wildlife movement patterns and look for trails. Use special purpose fencing only in the areas needed, such as livestock pastures, livestock feeding areas, around haystacks, gardens, orchards, yards, play areas, or kennels. Design property boundary fences so wildlife can easily cross, or with gaps or lay-down sections for wildlife passage wherever livestock are not present.

Work with your land's topography. Swales, gullies, ridges and stream corridors can funnel wildlife through an area – keep these open to allow wildlife passage and avoid topography traps.

Place crossings, jumps, open gates and other wildlife openings in appropriate locations. Deer and elk are more likely to use openings at fence corners than in the middle of a fence run, unless there is cover, habitat or natural corridors or trails to attract them through.

Intermittent openings should be placed where animals naturally travel; in riparian corridors, along gullies and ridges, and on existing game trails.

Wildlife Friendly Ideal

Wildlife friendly fences should be low enough for adult animals to jump, high enough for animals to crawl under, and minimize the chance of tangling. Also design the fence with:

- A top wire or rail preferably no more than 40" above the ground, and absolutely no more than 52";
- At least 12" between the top two wires;
- At least 18" between the bottom wire or rail and the ground;
- Smooth wire or rail for the top, and smooth wire on bottom;
- No vertical stays;
- Posts at 16.5-foot intervals;
- Gates, drop-downs, or other passages where wildlife congregate and cross.

References

Paige, C. 2008. A Landowner's Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences. Landowner/ Wildlife Resource Program, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena, MT. 44 pp.

National Audubon Society Audubon-at-Home, USDA-NRCS, Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch, Arizona Antelope Foundation. Wildlife Friendly Fence (Online). <http://www.audubonresearchranch.org/PDFs/FenceBrochure-May2008.pdf> accessed 7/23/09.