

Choose the right fence for the farm

MIDDLETOWN, Ohio — Farm fencing is a capital investment, just like a tractor or combine. And like those implements, fencing can become more efficient, productive and economical when purchased carefully and used properly.

Good fence, can help boost farm profits.

Rotaton grazing, practical only with a good farm fence, increases forage efficiency up to 20 percent over continuous grazing.

And fenced timberland often produces three to four times more board feet than unfenced stands that suffer from foraging by wild and domestic animals.

There are other important farm management benefits with good fencing— some more difficult to measure in dollars and cents.

Fencing can control straying, protect seedlings until they are established, help control animal diseases, permit orderly rotation of crops and provide control over breeding.

Fencing is a long-term investment that can last 20 to 30 years and more under normal farming conditions.

Planning is essential to the process. The easiest way to start fence planning is with an aerial photograph of the farm. A good aerial photograph shows details of present farm layout plus some indications of the lay of the land. Maps are available for most farms from the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Extension agents, or from commercial aerial survey firms.

On the photograph, sketch where fences should be placed to best use the land for permanent pastures, hay production, woodlands or cultivated crop production.

What type of fence is needed?

Woven fence with at least one strand of barbed wire on top, usually is best for cattle. Hogs in confinement require a more sturdy enclosure which is best served by welded corral panel. Sheep should be contained only with woven fence because barbed wire can tear their fleece.

Custom fence builders

figure about one-half of total fence cost is in installation.

Fence posts, too, are an important consideration. Though wood posts typically provide a lower initial cost, steel ones usually are easier to install and can last up to 25 or 30 years or longer with little or no maintenance.

Wise selection of materials can reduce maintenance costs over the long run. Thickness of protective coating on fence wire is directly related to life expectancy of the fence. Size of the wire, gauge thickness, also contributes to total estimated life.

When selecting staples for the job, keep in mind their size and shape vary, depending on the type of wood post being used. Generally, the softer the wood, the longer the staple required. Galvanized staples last longer and are less apt to trigger rusting of the fastening wire.

With careful study, temporary or movable fences may do the job economically and effectively around cultivated fields. But movable fences usually don't last more than three years and are not feasible replacements for permanent fence.

Match your fence plans to your long-range crop rotation and livestock production. The right selection of fencing material can make your farm a more efficient, and productive business, while holding down costs.



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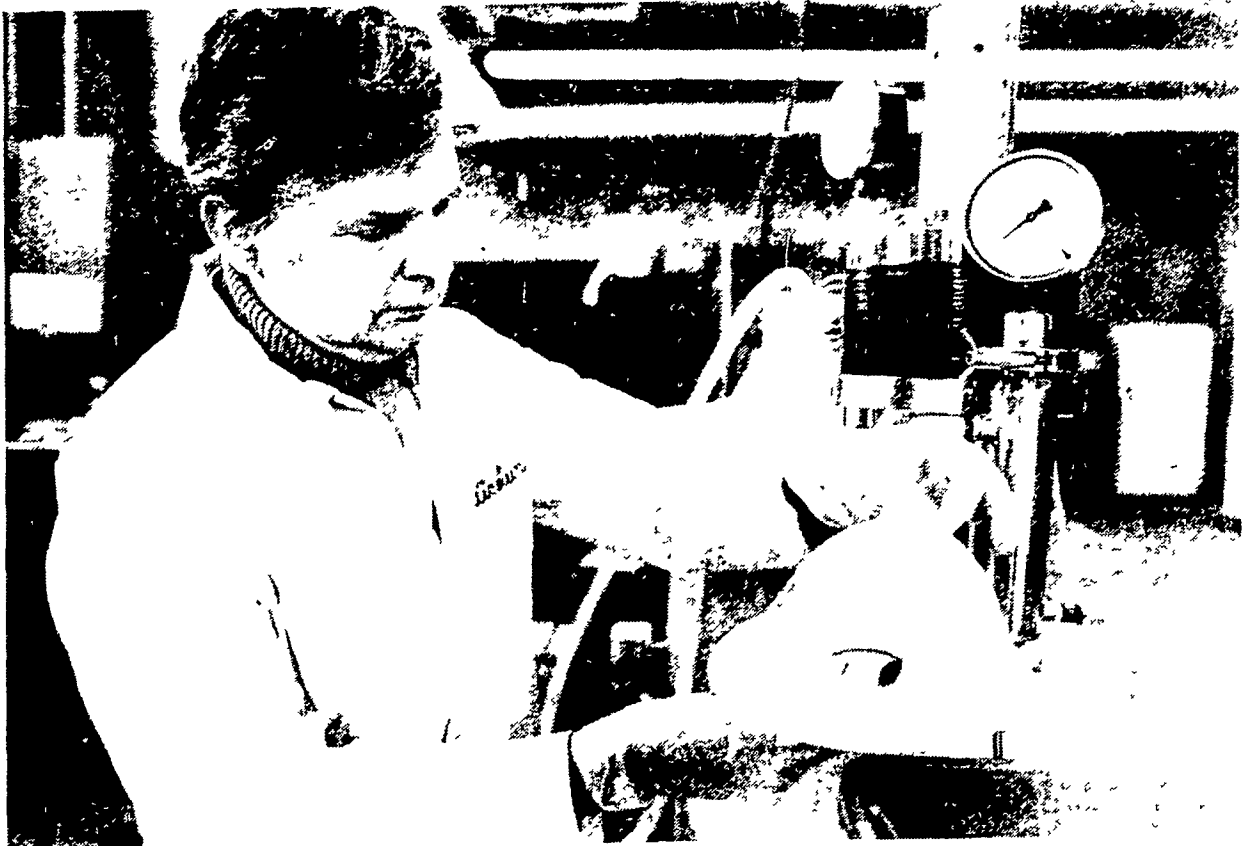
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New process improves 'natural' dyes

University of Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station horticulturist Robert C. Wiley peels back a filter membrane he uses in a new process that purifies and concentrates colored liquids extracted

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