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I am currently involved in revising old and writing new standards and specifications for conservation practices that we use in Pennsylvania. The practice that I am currently working on is fencing. Have you ever thought about all the different fencing mate-

rials on the market? Well if you are like me, you did not.

Now that I am working on the fencing standard, it has forced me to think about the many alternatives and products that are available. Let's talk about what some of these alternatives are and their applications and merits.

Let's look at fencing materials. They range from high tensile steel wire to plastic

polywire (twine) or plastic ribbons. The high tensile steel is sold according to its gauge which ranges from 12½ to 16 gauge. Remember, the lower the gauge, the higher the strength, and the more current the wire is capable of carrying. These wires are galvanized and that gives them a long life expectancy. The 12 ½ gauge wire is used for perimeter fencing and the more permanent interior subdivision fences. The most preferred gauge for subdivision fences is the 16 gauge wire, but it is more easily broken.

There are other choices beside the gauge to consider when selecting wire. There are choices in the coatings —

galvanized, aluminum clad or Galfan, which is a zinc alloy (a mixture of aluminum and zinc). The Galfan coating offers up to seven times the corrosion protection of normal galvanized coatings.

There are also many soft wires on the market, but they fail to offer the strength that the high tensile steel does. Aluminum is one of the soft wires I find to be a benefit in a grazing system when you have long runs of wire to electrify. The carrying capacity of aluminum wire is said to be 2 to 2½ times that of steel, therefore, you could use one aluminum wire to run a charge for a longer distance and then transfer it onto the steel wire. One caution with this approach is the problem of connecting steel and aluminum wires and oxidation problems. These require special precautions.

If you need fencing for temporary applications, there are polywire or twines, and polyribbons. These products are twisted or woven plastic

twines with three to nine strands of stainless steel wires that conduct electric current. When these products are used with temporary fence posts it allows the grazer the flexibility to provide temporary fencing for many different applications. The ribbons allow for greater visibility to livestock and people, but are much more affected by the wind. There are also temporary types of electric netting, which is polywire woven into a net to contain smaller, hard to contain livestock such as sheep or goats.

If you need a system that is more secure and non-electrified, you can use woven wire. This galvanized wire comes in varying heights. It ranges from 3½ feet high for sheep to 8 feet high for deer fencing. A product that is relatively new to the market is plastic deer netting which comes in 5- to 8-foot heights, but it lacks the permanency of the woven wire types of deer fencing.

I hope by now you realize

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