

Now Is The Time To Think About Your Fencing Needs

Glenn W. Michalak
Delaware Valley College
Equestrian Center Manager

For any horse owner, proper upkeep of fencing is essential to the health and well being of his or her animal(s).

Proper fencing for your horses is a critical choice. Good, correctly installed and maintained fencing will make all the difference for your horse's safety.

As spring approaches, now is a good time to re-evaluate existing fence, as many installers are booking jobs for the upcoming year.

The most commonly used material is wood, usually in the form of post and board. Wood fencing

is the least expensive material of all fencing.

It comes in various forms, such as split rail, three or four boards, or sometimes a wire mesh topped with a sight board. Most wood fencing is treated, and has longevity of 20 to 25 years. The downside is that it will need painting every three to five years and can be an inviting substance for a horse to chew on.

Currently, a popular fencing material is various forms of PVC (polyvinyl chloride). It has great durability and is resistant to chewing. It and has little or no maintenance, save being power washed from time to time.

It is more expensive than all other materials, and there is a slight risk of a board shattering in very cold weather if run into by a horse. It is wise to install an

electrified tape running along the inside of the rail to keep the horse from chewing or leaning over the fence.

Flexible rubber fencing, such as Centaur, is also popular for the same reasons, but has the advantage over PVC of being flexible enough for a horse to hit the fencing and bounce back.

Woven wire fencing is a good choice as well, especially for perimeters of pastures. Box wire fence has a weave creating a box, which gets progressively smaller from bottom to top, allowing a horse to kick it, but not have its leg become caught.

Diamond wire mesh is a tightly woven fence material, which, because of its design, resists a horse's kicking, but will give some so a horse may not be severely injured. Diamond wire has little downside, outside of expense. It is virtually maintenance free when properly installed, and has a life span of 20 to 25 years.

One word of caution a barbed wire fence should never be used for horses! Unlike cattle, their skin is easily cut by the material and may leave permanent scars. Whatever product you choose, a lot will depend on your long-term maintenance requirements, and how much you can invest in the short term.

Equine Tack Swap Scheduled

DEANNA CUNFER
Carbon/Schuylkill Co.
Correspondent

NAZARETH (Northampton Co.)—As spring approaches the Northampton County 4-H Center is once again gearing up to host a variety of events throughout the summer.

One of the season's opening events is the annual Equine Tack Swap scheduled 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 12. The 4-H Center is located on Bushkill Center Road, Nazareth on five acres with an outdoor arena, pole barn, kitchen, a large indoor exhibit area and modern toilet facilities.

The tack swap is open to anyone who wishes to buy or sell horse related items, apparel and tack. No live animals or consignment items will be sold. All sellers must have a table.

Anyone wishing to sell items in the indoor and pole barn areas must preregister at a cost of \$15

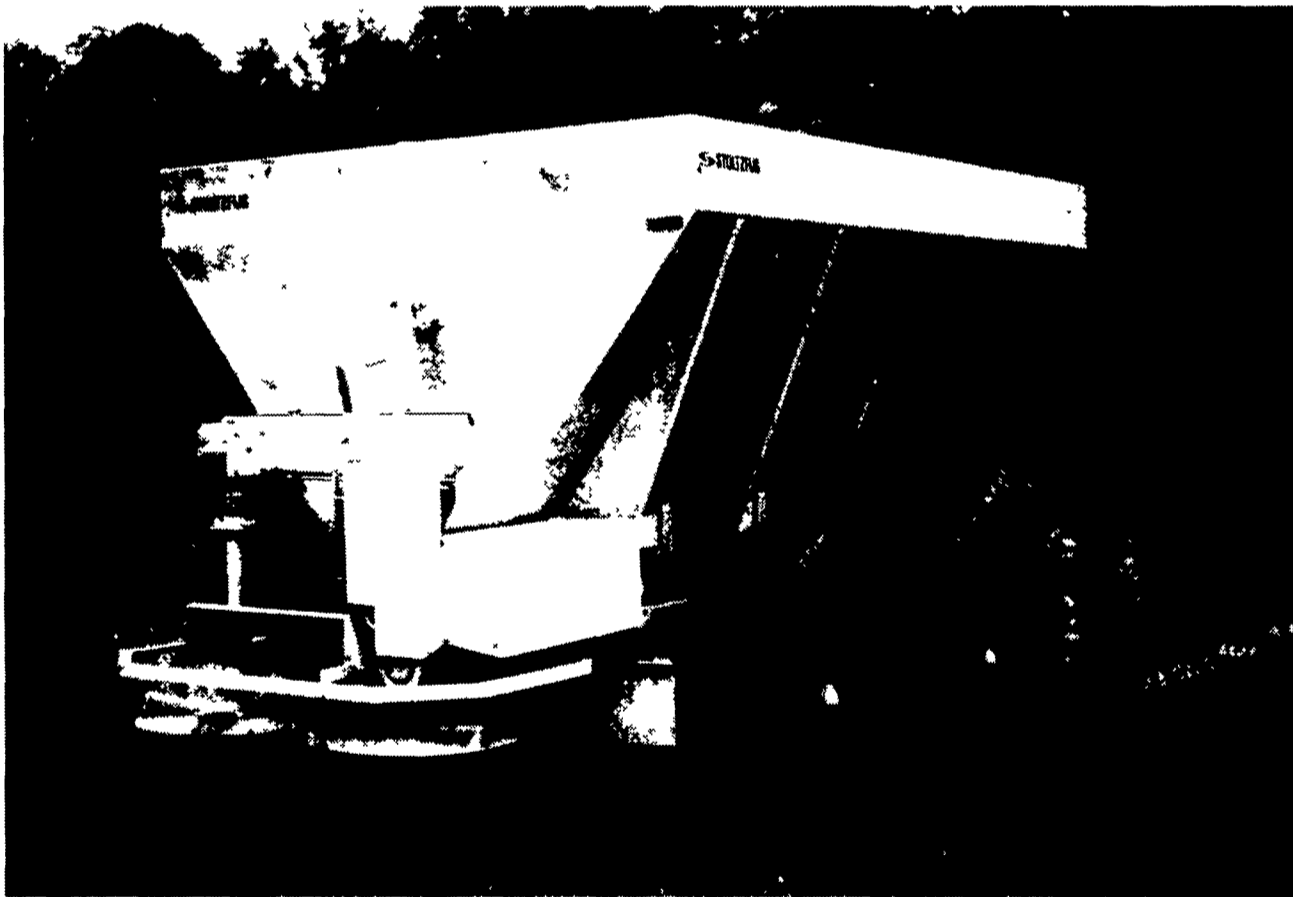
per table in the indoor area; \$12 per table in the pole barn area and \$10 per spot in the outdoor arena, weather permitting. Outdoor arena spots will be allocated on the day of the event. Persons with large equipment to sell are welcome to display on the open grounds for the registration fee.

This annual Tack Swap is an excellent means to buy and sell horse related items as it draws visitors and vendors from far and wide, many from neighboring states that make a point of attending the event each year.

Food will be available for purchase during the day courtesy of Backtrackers 4-H Horse and Pony Club. Admission to the grounds is free and open to the public.

For more information contact Jan Martin at (610) 837-7294 or call the Northampton County Cooperative Extension office at (610) 746-1970.

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Sheep, Lamb Inventory Five Percent Lower

WASHINGTON, D.C. — All sheep and lamb inventory in the United States on January 1, 2003, totaled 6.35 million head, down 5 percent from 2002 and 9 percent below two years ago. The inventory has trended down since peaking at 56.2 million head in 1942, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

• Breeding sheep inventory declined to 4.68 million head on January 1, 2003, down 5 percent from 4.91 million head on January 1, 2002. Ewes one year old and older, at 3.79 million head, were 5 percent below last year.

• Market sheep and lambs on January 1, 2003, totaled 1.67 million head, down 6 percent from January 1, 2002. Market lambs comprised 96 percent of the total. Twenty-six percent were lambs under 65 pounds, 17 percent were 65 - 84 pounds, 24 percent 85 - 105 pounds, 29 percent were over 105 pounds, and 4 percent were market sheep.

The 2002 lamb crop of 4.36 million head was down 3 percent from 2001 and established a new record low. The 2002 lambing rate was 110 per 100 ewes one year old and older on January 1,

2002, unchanged from 2001.

The number of operations with sheep during 2002 totaled 64,170, down 1 percent from 2001 and 3 percent from 2000.

Shorn wool production in the United States during 2002 was 41.2 million pounds, down 4 percent from 2001. Sheep and lambs shorn totaled 5.45 million head, down 4 percent from 2001. The average price paid for wool sold in 2002 was \$0.53 per pound for a total value of \$21.8 million dollars, up 42 percent from \$15.3 million dollars in 2001.

All goat inventory in Texas on January 1, 2003 totaled 1.20 million head, down 4 percent from 2002 and 14 percent below two years ago.

Mohair production in the three major producing states (Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas) during 2002 was 2.13 million pounds, up 8 percent from 2001. Goats and kids clipped, at 283,000 head, were down 9 percent from 2001. Average weight per clip was 7.5 pounds compared with 6.4 pounds a year earlier. Value of mohair was \$3.4 million dollars, down 20 percent from 2001.

