

INCREASE PASTURE CARRYING CAPACITY USING CROSS FENCES

Electric fence is the easiest and cheapest way to increase production from summer pastures. Dividing pastures with electric cross fences gives you more control of when and where your cattle graze. It helps you encourage cattle to graze pastures more uniformly and completely, including areas they normally avoid. And, it can help you improve the health and vigor of your grass by giving it time to recover and regrow after each grazing. As a result, your grass production and pasture carrying capacity will increase. This will be especially valuable this year considering the currently high cost of pasture.

I'm sure you've seen many ads promoting high-powered, high-tensile, imported electric fencing systems. I encourage using these systems in many situations – I use them myself sometimes. But, cross fences do not need to be permanent, nor do they need to be expensive. This is especially true if you already have electric fencing your animals respect. And using fencing equipment you already have gives you an inexpensive opportunity to experiment with where you might eventually place a more permanent cross fence.

The electric fence that keeps your cows on stalks during winter can give you this inexpensive opportunity to try some cross fencing where you have been reluctant to try it before. You might need to use two strands, though, to help keep baby calves in place.

So, as spring growth of your pastures begins, use your winter electric fence to try some extra summer cross fencing of your pastures.

More grass, better gains, and better profits might be the result.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
314 Keim Hall—East Campus
Lincoln NE 68583-0915
402-4742-2577
banderson1@unl.edu

