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**April 18, 2014**

## **NEW INNOVATION – YOUR PIVOT AS A FENCE**

I like to mention new technology and innovation in agriculture that changes the way we think about things traditionally. Last week I had an opportunity to visit a farm operation by Milford that utilizes cover crops such as turnips and oilseed radish on 1,000 acres of seed corn fields for fall winter and spring grazing. By changing calving to August and September, the 250 head cow-calf producer has successfully weaned large calves the first part of April. The weaned calves weighed an average of 601 pounds the first week in April this year which is typical the past five years. The calves were sold to a local feed yard. When grass becomes in short supply in the summer, the heavy cows can be fed less expensive diets in the dry lot.

During the farm visit, UNL Agricultural Engineer Jason Gross stopped by and described the new idea using the pivot as a fence. The question was, could a new invention increase the calf gains even further? Essentially the pivot fence provides a new tool for the cattle industry to graze more efficiently in the field backgrounding calves on winter annual forages, windrowed forages, cornstalks and cover crops. It can even be a new tool for fields wrecked with fire or storm damage with a lot of corn on the ground.

The pivot fence invention has received the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) top 50 award for one of most innovative designs in engineering products or systems for the food and agriculture industries for 2014.

This *Pivot Fence* is marketed by High Plains Solutions, is patented pending and licensed through the University of Nebraska. The idea was featured in the March 2014 *Nebraska Farmer Magazine*. An electric wire runs the length of a standard pivot or 1300 feet long suspended from hangers attached to the truss rods. The hangers stabilize the height of the wire between towers, fitted for any model of pivot without any alterations of sprinkler attachments. It gives the producer a portable 1,300-foot cross fence that can be easily moved by either the center pivot's control panel or a computer or smart phone. The mechanism is adjustable, allowing the ability to maintain the proper wire height on rough crop fields.

I asked Jason how he keeps cattle from walking around the end tower. The perimeter is electric fenced close enough to the last pivot track that a "Koehn Swing gate" method is used to close the gap. More information on how the pivot fence works is at: <http://thepivotfence.com>

Jason learned last year he can successfully house cows or calves with portable fencing in the fall, winter or spring on forages or crop residues with the pivot fence. If the forage can be hayed, is tall enough to hay properly, and allowed to cure in a window, the feed quality can remain throughout the winter and cattle consumption increases. One example of this may be oats after corn silage harvest. Minimize soil contact with windrows by combining windrows. Give daily rations to minimize over-consumption by the cattle. Manure is naturally spread by the animals on the land and daily interaction from the beef producer improves calf disposition and behavior. More information is available about the pivot fence concept at E-Extension website. Go to <http://ow.ly/vVrpl>

I am observing that long-term no-till in a crop rotation and use of cover crops like cereal rye, turnips and oilseed radishes plus grazing in the field, can build soil structure and soil health. A farmer near Milford is proving cattle can graze in the spring longer than what we traditionally have been thinking. Can the pivot fence concept take this approach to a new level?

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