



Is Your Fence Adequate?

Owners are responsible in many states for damage caused by their unconfined animals. This may include damage done to a neighbor's crops, lawn or landscaping or animal-related traffic accidents.

Imagine the type of injuries that result when a car at highway speed hits a full-grown cow standing on the roadway. At night, with poor visibility, cattle are difficult to see and unpredictable. Yet many of us have witnessed cattle walking on roads and highways instead of contained by good fences. This is a common occurrence that results in disabling injuries and hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage each year.

What is a good fence?

The definition of the term "fence" has changed over time and varies from state to state. Many factors help determine what kind of fence is needed, such as the type of animal to be confined and the type of terrain and area to be fenced.

Although there are many types of fencing available, the standards suitable for confining cattle are not the same standards for confining hogs or sheep. The following are typical minimum requirements for a legal barbwire cattle fence:

- » Contains no less than three wires (four to five wires are preferred).
- » The top wire is not less than four feet from the ground (five feet is preferred).

- » The bottom wire is not less than one-and-a-half feet or more than two feet from the ground.
- » The center wires are evenly placed between the upper and lower wires.
- » All wires are well stretched and securely fastened to posts.
- » Barbed wire is not less than 13 gauge in thickness (a heavier gauge is preferred).
- » Posts are placed no more than one rod (16.5 feet) apart (12 feet is preferred).
- » Posts are set to a minimum depth of two-and-a-half feet in the ground and stand a minimum of four feet above the ground (five feet is preferred).

While these cattle fence standards are generally accepted in most areas, individual state laws vary. Variations include specific rules applying to standards such as interior fences, perimeter fences, electric fences, etc. To make sure you have the correct information for your area, check with your local agricultural extension office to obtain a copy of the laws that apply in your area.

For more information about American Family's Loss Control Services, visit www.amfam.com

DISCLAIMER

The recommendations printed here follow generally accepted safety standards. Compliance with these recommendations does not guarantee that you will be in conformance with any building code, or federal, state or local regulations regarding safety or fire. Compliance does not ensure the absolute safety of you, your operations or place of business.