



Fencing - the first line of defence



Feral pigs and wild dogs cause an estimated \$166 million dollars per annum of damage to farmers already struggling with the effects of drought, while environmental costs go far beyond that.

In an effort to stem this flow of economic and environmental losses, fencing has again come to the forefront of the battle against pest animal control as governments, both state and federal, realise the important role played by the humble fence.

Since the late 1880's, fencing has played a pivotal role in the management of pest animals in Australia, the first line of defence against a group of animals that threaten millions of dollars of primary production each year.

The borders of Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland in particular are no strangers to never-ending fence lines, established in a desperate attempt to contain the damage introduced species wreck on crops and native species.

However the recent hardships imposed by the drought have led to Governments offering tax breaks in the form of pest control fencing in an effort to stem the movement of pest animals as they go in search for more feed.

Fence Design

Fencing, part of the conventional suite of pest animal controls, is a costly exercise particularly as conventional stock fencing will not act as a deterrent to most pest animals.

Government research projects over the years have looked at various methods of fencing to maximise their cost effectiveness. However it is widely agreed that no pest animal management program is complete without a fence.

The primary deterrent to pest animals is the physical barrier provided by the fence. Traditionally, fence designs have varied according to the pest animal being managed; however recent developments in wire strength, picket spacing and pre-fabricated wire construction have resulted in a much more uniform approach.

Knowledge of effective fence design is being shared among the states, with great success. A fence design which originated in Tasmania as a control for wallabies inhabiting plantations and raiding pasture crops has been adapted and is currently being trialled on the Dog Fence between South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland.

The same fence design is being considered by the Western Australian government for use in their Dog Fence. So while the pest animal being faced may vary, effective design has meant a common approach can be taken.

Now, new developments in fencing technology are ramping up the protection offered to pastoralists and graziers protection against wild pigs, wallabies and foxes.





Technology Advances

The old chicken and rabbit wire fences, commonly seen stretching across sandy tracts of desert, often used up to three different types of wire, in layers, to increase the effectiveness of the fence.

However the hinge joints and the thin wire meant that animals were able to push or bite their way through the barrier with little effort. The time and expense spent on the construction of the fence then paled in comparison to the thousands of man hours and materials required to monitor and repair holes.

The recent development of new pre-fabricated wire products with rigid pickets and concealed wire ends has the potential to vastly reduce the amount of time to erect a fence, while the new wire knotting technology provides a stronger barrier to even the most persistent ferals.

The line wires and picket spacing in the pre-fabricated wire products are also being trialed as a way to avoid sand-build up along the fence line, that would otherwise reduce the height of the fence and its power as a barrier.

Advances in wire coating technology have also meant a reduction in the effects of corrosion giving the wire a longer useful life.

Wooden fence posts have traditionally been used as a cheaper, more readily available option. Longer, stronger steel posts are now an option for many, giving greater stability in the shifting desert sands and occasional flooding, and again employing a corrosion resistant coating, improving the performance of steel in harsh inland conditions.

Case Study – the Dog Fence

The 600 kilometres of fence line controlled by the Wild Dog Destruction Board commands the careers of 15 people and a budget this year of \$1.5million dollars.

Built in the 1880's as a rabbit fence, then converted in 1917 to a dog fence, it is currently under the watchful eye of Tony Mayo, Operations Manager of the Dog Fence.

Based in Smithville, 250 kilometres north of Broken Hill, Tony and his team of 14, including leading hands, boundary riders

and grader operators maintain the fence to keep dogs out of the multi-million dollar pastoral industry in the Western Division of New South Wales.

“Traditionally the fence has been constructed with netting at a height of six feet, or 1.8 metres,” Tony says, “but the decline in good quality netting has meant that we are on the look out for a suitable alternative.

“The netting requires a high level of maintenance as the animals push or bite holes in it, and sand builds up against the base of the fence.

“We have recently commenced a trial with a new product on the market called Waratah StockSafe-T, which we hope will alleviate both these pressures and result in a far more efficient fence.

“The design of this new fence is much sturdier than netting and the wires are a thicker diameter, so far has a lot going for it, so we will wait and see.”

A length of 50 metres of the trial fence has been constructed on the SA / NSW border, and another 50 metre section is to be built on the SA / QLD border. Tony and his team will monitor the fence over the windiest part of the year, September through to December, to see how it performs.

“Fencing is just part of the mix of effective pest animal control that includes trapping, baiting and shooting, but fences are the first line of defence,” according to Tony.

“Baiting and trapping will not do what a fence does, which is present an impenetrable boundary, so the fence really is the key which holds it all together.”

If successful, the new fence will be rolled out gradually as the old fence needs to be replaced. Tony anticipates that the Wild Dog Destruction Board will make a decision on the future of the fence in early 2008.

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Article kindly provided by **One Steel**.





Firearm Safety



No matter what situation you are in, safety is of utmost importance and the only way to ensure safety is to follow the rules. Shooting is one of the safest sports to participate in. Studies have shown that it is even safer than horse riding, football, basketball and even ping-pong.

Observe the following firearm safety rules and insist that others do the same:

Always Remember

1. Treat every firearm with respect. Ensure that the muzzle is always pointed in a safe direction.
2. Treat every firearm as if it is LOADED until you have personally proven otherwise.
3. Clear your firearm before handing it to someone else.
4. Clear the firearm after receiving it from someone else.
5. When a firearm is unattended, it must be left in a safe and stable position.
6. Never throw a firearm to someone else; this is stupid and dangerous. Do not attempt to catch a firearm thrown to you.
7. Never shoot at a hard flat surface, or at the surface of water, as there is the possibility of ricochet.
8. Always carry the firearm with a definite purpose, always having complete control of the firearm.
9. Never POINT ANY firearm, LOADED or EMPTY, at anyone.
10. Do not cock the firearm or place your finger inside the trigger until you are ready to fire.
11. Be sure of your target. Always identify your target before you fire.
12. Never fire whilst running. Always stop and take aim before firing.

13. Every time a firearm is handled for any purpose other than firing, unload and visually check to ensure the firearm is safe.
14. Check your ammunition. Old ammunition is not reliable.
15. Store your firearm in a dry, secure place.
16. Maintain your firearm in A1 condition.
17. Remember, guns and alcohol don't mix.

The Hunter's Code

I will consider myself an invited guest of the land holder, seeking his or her permission and so conducting myself that I may be welcome in the future.

I will obey the rules of safe gun handling and will courteously but firmly insist that others who hunt with me do the same.

I will obey all game laws and regulations and will insist that my companions do likewise.

I will do my best to acquire those marksmanship and hunting skills that assure clean, sportsmanlike kills.

I will support conservation efforts that can assure good hunting for future generations of Australians.

I will pass along to younger hunters the attitudes and skills essential to a true outdoor sportsman.

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Basic Range Rules

While out at the shooting range, certain rules must be obeyed if you want to enjoy a day of shooting. The following rules are general; range rules may vary according to the discipline being shot:

1. The range officer (RO) is in charge of everybody and must be obeyed immediately.
2. Under no circumstances may firearms be loaded except when on the firing line and by command of the RO.
3. Firearms that are not in bags or cases must be carried with the muzzles pointed safely and the actions open.
4. Firearms that are not in bags or cases must have the bolts and magazines removed, where possible.
5. Self-loading firearms with actions that do not remain open must be held open either with a breech safety plug or with an object (such as an ice-cream stick or piece of cardboard) so that it is clearly visible that they are not loaded.
6. All persons have an obligation to report any potentially dangerous situation to the RO immediately.
7. Firearms may not be handled behind the firing line. Persons wishing to examine, adjust, clean or otherwise handle firearms must only do so in a designated safe area or on the actual firing line.
8. No-one is permitted to approach the firing line until the RO issues the command (eg, 'shooters to the line').
9. You may not touch any firearm until the RO issues the appropriate command.
10. On the command 'cease fire' all shooters must immediately open the action, put their firearm down - muzzle pointed down range - and stand immediately behind the firing line to await the RO who will issue further instructions or clear each firearm in turn.
11. No-one is permitted to go down range until the RO has cleared all firearms and issued the command 'the range is now clear to go forward!' Once the range is clear, the RO's duty is to ensure no-one approaches the firing line.
12. Firing may not commence until the appropriate warning flags have been erected in accordance with the club's rulings.
13. Shooting may only be at the proper targets. All fauna is protected on the range and persons who deliberately shoot at non-standard targets will be expelled from the range.
14. Hearing and eye protection is to be worn by all personnel, at all times, when firing is taking place. (Refer to local range rules.)



Article supplied by Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (South Australia) www.ssaasa.org.au.

