

May 13, 2019
 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 David Dugan
 Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources
 and Community Development

SOACDF Meetings Scheduled

The informational meetings for the 2019-2020 projects through the Southern Ohio Agricultural and Community Development Foundation will be in July. Make plans to attend one of these meetings if you plan to apply for grants this coming year.

The local meetings will be on July 2 in the evening at the Cherry Fork Gym and on Friday, July 5 at the Southern Hills Career and Technical Center administration building at 10:30 a.m. If you have questions about the meetings, or the programs, you can call the Foundation at 937-393-2700 or check out the website. The web address is <http://soacdf.net>

Teaching Livestock to Respect Electric Fences

Last week I discussed the use of electric fence in livestock operations. I found an article from Don Ashford that addresses training livestock to electric fence. There are several uses for electric fences in most livestock operations and Don addresses several of these.

Electric fencing is fine. It makes it possible to be more flexible and versatile with our management and I recommend it without reservation. As one of the ads by one of the companies that sell power fencing products states, it will maximize grazing and increase profits, and without question, that's what all of us who use or plan to use electric fences are hoping to do. But, as with most things that we do there is a process, a step-by-step method, that makes all of this work as it should work.

Now we all can recognize that a 4 or 5 strand hard wire electric fence with proper post spacing is without question a physical barrier. But what about that one strand of poly wire that will divide the pasture on a temporary basis and is moved periodically? Cattle can push it down, run thru it or jump over it. Sheep and goats can push against it and go under it or over it as well. (Now I'm guessing here about the sheep and goats I really don't know about them.)

I have never attended a pasture walk or workshop that included fencing instruction that did not emphasize the fact that electric fencing, especially poly-wire, is a psychological barrier not a physical one. Yet, the mistake I have seen some folks make, and they pay for it over and over again, is simply failing to train the livestock to respect the electric fence. Their animals don't understand the idea of a psychological barrier. This can lead to frustration, wasted time, and in some cases a complete collapse



of the whole operation.

Here's how we have trained hundreds of stocker calves to the electric fence and I have been told that this works for sheep and goats as well. These are sale barn calves not home raised calves so it is fair to say that some of them have not been treated very well. The calves are unloaded into a catch pen with water and hay and are kept there for 24 hours.

The day that they are turned out of these pens they are released into what we call a trap. This is a gathering pen that funnels into the working pens. The calves are not driven out of the pens that they have spent the last 24 hours in. We just open the gate, walk away, and leave the calves on their own.

The trap has two rolls of hay, one at each end, and a water trough at the end farthest from the gate leaving the catch pen. We run a single poly wire across the trap, except for an opening on one side about 15 feet wide. Animals must travel through this gap to get from one end of the trap to the other and with the water trough only on one end it becomes necessary to make this trip. The rolls of hay are placed close to the hard wire perimeter to cut down on fence walking.

The part of this whole process that makes it work is the fact that the cattle are allowed to move from the catch pens into the trap on their own. This cuts down on a lot of running and gives them the opportunity to explore their surroundings without being harassed. The fact that they are satisfying their curiosity will cause them to discover the poly wire across the trap and come in contact with it on their own. Without question this will be a shocking experience, and it is seldom that a calf will try it more than a couple of times and then it will learn to walk to the end of the poly wire. There will be from time to time when a calf will jump into the poly wire and take it down then it is just a simple task to put it back up, no real damage. After a day or two the calves have learned that every fence plus the poly wire will shock so they learn to avoid all fences.

Now it is time to turn the calves into the paddocks. We have learned that it works best to not make the first paddock any larger than it needs to be to allow for one days grazing. This cuts down on walking and still gives the calves what they need. We want and need the calves to follow us so it will take some time for them to learn to come to call but the fact that they are going to fresh grass will, after a few days, make this an easy chore. If there is a secret to this it is allowing the cattle time to learn about the electric fence from their experience.

Dates to Remember

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| May 16 | Weed Identification at Western Brown HS Community Room at 7:00 p.m. Free and open to the public, brought to you by the Brown Co. Master Gardeners. |
| July 7-13 | Adams County Fair |