



Best Practice Infrastructure Management

Sheet 13.0a

Fences and Gates

Why change?

Fences and gates are a vital part of efficient operations, particularly on livestock farms. If correctly positioned and designed they will give benefits including reduced animal disease risks, running costs and increased capital value. By taking action to build or renew fences and gates, you can:

- reduce costs
- protect vulnerable crops, river banks, trees and other habitats
- improve stock growth and health
- reduce time spent recovering stock
- enhance the rural environment.



Simple fences can increase profitability and reduce costs

Steps to Success

1. **Review** the current situation by using your farm map to identify areas where new or repaired fences, and gates, could help with the operation of your enterprise including any permanent or seasonal requirements. Take account of factors such as terrain, access to site, usage requirements, boundaries, climatic effects, snow, flooding, natural bank erosion and pollution.

2. **Identify** potential opportunities such as:

- banks of watercourses where stock access is increasing erosion and causing straying
- stream crossings where stock may be injured, pick up diseases and cause pollution
- drinking points to restrict access to watercourses
- marshy areas where access and grazing may be most valuable in dry periods
- new woodland
- seasonal grazing including inside bankside fencing where gates will be needed
- moving gateways where they are a pathway for run-off from fields.

3. **Calculate** the cost-benefit of these opportunities by comparing the potential savings with the costs of providing suitable fences and gates. Identify the payback period.

4. **Prioritise** the opportunities you have identified by considering their cost-effectiveness and the benefits to animal health, as well as the reduced risk of pollution.

5. **Implement** the action plan taking account of:

- costs such as labour, materials and grants
- intended purpose and life of fence
- maintenance requirements
- water supply for livestock drinking
- flood prone areas where a temporary electric fence may be most suitable.

6. **Check** to ensure that your fences are in good condition and any damage is repaired promptly.

7. **Monitor** progress to ensure that fences/gates are provided where necessary in order to achieve the benefits you have identified on your farm.



Best Practice Infrastructure Management

Sheet 13.0b

Fences and Gates - practical examples

A farm in West Devon of 37ha with mainly improved permanent pasture, was losing valuable land from severe erosion from unstable riverbanks. Fencing was recommended to allow natural variably-rooted vegetation to establish along the riverbank to reduce erosion, prevent stock wearing down the banks by crossing the river and to improve fish habitat. With grant assistance, a 225m multi-strand high tensile fence (flood resistant and excludes cattle and sheep) with gate for access was constructed.

Countryside Stewardship.

Under the current Mid-Tier system farmers can apply for fencing and gates as capital items to help meet habitat maintenance or creation options or where fencing is required to meet grazing requirements, to prevent water course pollution or to protect environmental features

In 2008, a farmer in north Cornwall applied for an England Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative grant to fence an area of 0.5ha of wetland on his mixed livestock farm. This was done to reduce the incidence of foot problems he was experiencing in his herd. 350m of fencing was erected. A gate was added to allow summer grazing during dry periods as a management tool, and to ensure that his BPS area was not affected.

Cost of the fencing and access gate was £1500. With a Catchment Sensitive Farming grant of £800 the cost to the farmer was £700. Savings included reduced vet bills for lameness at £4/head/year = £400. Financial payback is in less than 2 years. Additionally, the farmer was able to incorporate the fenced area in to further stewardship options giving additional payments.



Fencing protects habitats and livestock

Remember

- There are considerable potential savings to be made through improved fencing and a reduced risk of water pollution.
- Plan and cost your fences and gates to match the circumstances, e.g. on land liable to flooding.
- Significant bank side works may need permission from the Environment Agency and Flood Consent from your local council.



This information sheet is part of a series produced by Westcountry Rivers Trust providing farmers with advice on land management practices to protect water bodies. The advice enables farmers to use farm resources more efficiently, helping to meet Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, Cross Compliance, Farming Rules for Water and other regulations while protecting our environment and natural resources.

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