

Tennessee Man Makes Childhood Dream a Reality on Bullbourne Bison Ranch



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better together

Courtesy of Bullbourne Bison

Daniel Johnson is a Cornersville, Tennessee bison rancher and fencing contractor.

Majestic bison grazing. Each morning, this scene greets 33-year-old bison rancher and fencing contractor Daniel Johnson.

"I'm a happy man just waking up and watching them. They are quiet, but strong creatures," says Johnson of his childhood-dream-come-true.

Johnson wanted to raise bison since he was first introduced to them as a kid watching the movie *Dances with Wolves*. But he knew it would not be simple to turn this dream into reality. "I had no idea what it would take to raise bison. I was not raised on a farm or ranch. What I did know was it took a lot of money to own land," Johnson explains.

Relying on experts

Not knowing how to do something never stopped Johnson. He's good at finding experts to teach him what he needs to know.

"I learn from experts – watching and listening to them. I am always learning."

So, when it came time to build a bison ranch on a picturesque 100 acres of rolling hills near Cornersville, Tennessee, Johnson joined the National Bison Association. The Association connected Johnson with longtime bison rancher, Fred Nance. Nance became Johnson's mentor. "Fred is a salt of the earth kind of guy who let me come to his place hundreds of times. He told me all the things he did wrong and I took notes."

Johnson decided to buy his first nine bison from Nance. But

there was a lot of work he needed to complete before he could welcome a herd of 2,000-pound bison onto his ranch. Although the land he bought after selling his Franklin, Tennessee fitness club was beautiful, barns and fences needed to be built and pastures restored.

Johnson bought a tractor and began clearing brush, killing weeds and reseeding pastures. He reached out to local fencing contractors. When it became obvious that they did not have experience in building fence to contain bison, he decided to teach himself.

"I'm of the belief that there is nothing physical that you cannot learn to do if you want to do it," Johnson explains.

In researching bison, Johnson knew he needed substantial fencing. He designed the fence system on his ranch so if bison were to get out of one fence, there would be another fence to stop them. To learn how, he began watching YouTube videos. While watching a how-to build an H-brace video, he was introduced to his fencing mentor, Steven Sarson, Bekaert Fence Pro and Technical Support Manager.

"After that video, I watched every single video on the Bekaert channel. Then, I left a question for Steven. Steven responded with his phone number. The rest is history. I call him every time I have a fencing question."

Which is quite often. After Johnson finished building several miles of 8-foot tall Bekaert Game Fence and installing 9-strand high-tensile smooth wire electric crossfencing on his own property, he began getting requests to build fence for others.

Today, along with Bullbourne Bison, a direct-sales bison meat business, Johnson operates a fencing company.

"I love the act of creation. Every time I step onto a client's

property, I love the fact I am creating something that is completely original. I constructed it with my bare hands," Johnson explains.

A professed perfectionist, he only uses the highest quality fencing materials. "Once the posts are in the ground and the H-brace is built, everything else has to do with what kind of products you use," he explains.

In addition to quality wire, among his favorite products are Gripple joiners. Gripples can be used to quickly and securely connect two wires when fixing existing fence or constructing a new fence. "I only have to connect two wires and it is locked in. It's not going anywhere. No matter how good you get at tying termination knots, they can still fail," Johnson explains.

DIY Fencing Tips

So, what makes a well-built fence?

Johnson's mentor, Steven Sarson shares a few tried and true tips he's picked up over the more than 30 years he's spent helping DIY fencers like Johnson.

Purpose determines materials

Before purchasing fencing supplies, take some time to consider the fence's purpose. What type of livestock will it be keeping in? Or what type of wildlife will it be keeping out? And what will the stocking densities be? "Depending on stocking densities, a fence is either a physical barrier or a boundary," explains Sarson.

The answers to these questions help determine fencing materials and design.

Build a good brace

The brace, Sarson says, "is the heart and soul of the fence." He explains, if a brace is built incorrectly, it doesn't matter the quality of materials or skill applied to installing the rest of the fence. If the brace fails the fence fails. A well-built brace can absorb 6000-pounds of pressure.

What makes a good brace?

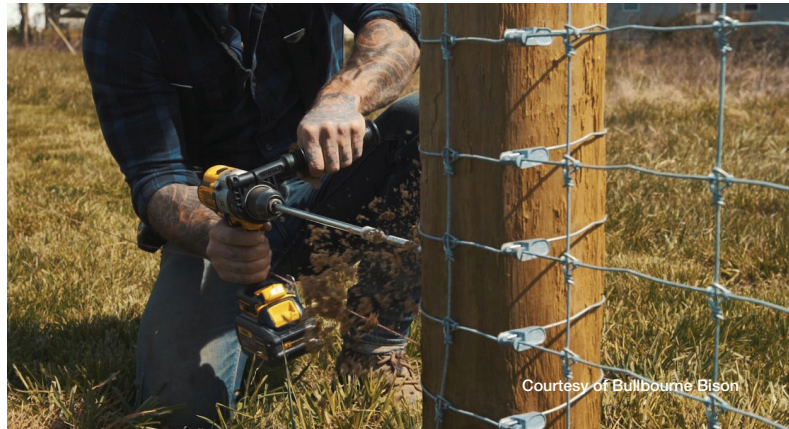
Round posts: When using wood posts, DO NOT use square posts. Round posts, with all the growth rings in-tact, have the strength of the tree. "Those growth rings that make that tree stand strong, will do the same for the fence. A round post is basically a full tree treated," Sarson says.

Square posts are susceptible to rot and are not as strong because they are either made of heartwood, which will not absorb treatment or include only partial growth rings.

Depending on terrain, availability and preference, welded pipe braces are also a viable option.

Brace pins: Use brace pins to secure the top rail, instead of notching the wood to hold the brace together.

High-tensile wire: Tensile strength increases the longevity of a fence and reduces cost-per-foot. The greater the tensile strength, the smaller gauge, lighter weight and more flexible the steel, which reduces cost-per-roll, risk of sag and number of fence posts needed to complete the project.



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Today, along with Bullbourne Bison, a direct-sales bison meat business, Daniel Johnson operate a fencing company. Johnson uses T-Grips to tie off his woven wire at ends and corners.

Line Post Tips

Three options for posts:

1. Use all wood if using wood braces
2. Use all pipe posts if using pipe braces
3. 4-to-1: The best fences use one, round wood post to every four, T-posts.

Galvanized T-Posts: Don't skimp when it comes to accessories like brace pins and T-posts. After investing the time to construct a good brace, it only makes sense to invest in accessories that will hold up as long as the brace and quality wire.

Spacing: The distance between posts can vary depending on stocking density, terrain and type of fence. However, every dip and rise needs a post.

Fasten high spots first: Fastening high spots first and dips second makes it easier to achieve correct tension and allows the wire to follow the terrain.

Never hard-staple: Leave enough room between the staple and the post so that the wire can move freely. This allows the wire to flex if an animal pushes against the fence, reduces the risk of sag and applies pressure to the brace instead of the post.

To learn more, reach out to Sarson and other Bekaert Fence Pros at the Ask the Fence Pro link found at <https://fencing.bekaert.com/>. To learn more about Johnson and see photos of Bullbourne Bison ranch, visit <https://www.bullbournebison.com/> or check out his Instagram account @bullbournebison.



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