

When Selecting Optimal Fence

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better together

Ask Steven Sarson a fencing question, and he has an answer. “I quite honestly enjoy the educational side of my job, which is why we have the Ask the Fence Pro option on our website, fencing.bekaert.com. I just replied to four questions this morning,” explains the Bekaert Fence Pro and Regional Sales Manager.

Working in the steel fence industry since 1991, it’s tough to find a question Sarson hasn’t responded to, because as he explains, fencing isn’t a one-size-fits-all product. “There are a number of different styles of fence and products within each style that work for certain animals or containment or exclusion goals,” he explains.

Before making a recommendation, there are two questions Sarson asks.

1. What type of animal are you trying to contain or exclude?
2. What safety precautions do you want to take?

“The type of fence you need for horses can be different from what you need if you raise cattle or sheep,” says Sarson, explaining that for horse farms he recommends woven wire with a smooth s-knot style that won’t catch on their hide if they rub up against it. And, he always asks if they have foals on the farm. “We have a fence style available which prevents foals from getting their leg stuck in the fence.”

When it comes to cattle and sheep producers looking to replace old fencing or install new fence for rotational grazing on pasture and rangeland, there are many options depending on stocking density and producer preference.

“Depending on stocking densities, a fence is either a physical barrier or a boundary. If they are grazing on a 10,000-acre cattle ranch out west where forage is scarce and stocking densities are low, a fence is a boundary,” Sarson says. “Whereas, in the eastern part of the country where forage is plentiful, densities increase, and the fence becomes much more of a physical barrier.”

Regional differences also impact the style of fencing livestock owners prefer. Name an area of the country, and Sarson will know the preferred style of fence. East of Virginia it’s smooth wire electric fence, Virginia and south it’s barbed wire. East of the Mississippi, producers want 4-point barbed wire, west they use 2-point.



And, not all fencing is designed to keep animals in.

Sarson works with municipalities, vineyards, orchards and others looking for exclusion fencing to keep deer, feral pigs and rabbits out. "I've seen deer in cities where I wonder where they live. Before they began using our exclusion products, Princeton, N.J., had a horrendous problem; plants couldn't grow in city parks, and everything from six-feet down on the trees is gone."

Cost-per-foot

Regardless of purpose or style preference, before buying a roll of fencing, Sarson says to consider cost-per-foot.

"At the end of the day, the key to buying fence is to know your cost-per-foot,"

Sarson says.

And, he explains producers can most often get the best price if they purchase the strongest wire. Which is the reason Sarson says calculating cost-per-foot often begins with tensile strength. Tensile strength is the resistance of steel or another material to break under pressure. As Sarson explains, the greater the tensile strength, the smaller gauge, lighter weight and less flexible the steel, which reduces cost per roll, risk of sag and number of fence posts needed to complete the project.

"High tensile strength is tough for some to wrap their head around because the gauge is smaller, meaning the wire is thinner, yet it is stronger, lasts longer and requires fewer posts," Sarson says. "Cattlemen will look at the high-tensile barbed wire and say there's no way that skinny barbed wire can be as good as that 12 gauge. That's when I put it

into the tensile wire machine and break it. Education is so important."

High-tensile wire fencing products have been available since the early 1970s. Bekaert has manufactured their own fencing products since the 1880s, and today manufacturing is done in Van Buren, Ark. The Van Buren facility is also where the company applies protective coatings.

Finishes prevent corrosion and protect a fence's longevity. Determining the protective finish needed depends upon the region, Sarson explains. "It's interesting, in the west—Kansas, the Dakotas, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana—a class 1 coated wire will last almost as long as a class 3 coating in the east because in the east we have acid rains, high humidity and coastal air."

If you have any questions about choosing a fence or are looking for installation tips, Sarson directs customers to the Bekaert website, <https://fencing.bekaert.com>. The website also features a place to connect directly with Sarson or other Bekaert Fence Pros.

