

Multi-species Grazing/Portable Net Fencing Jargon
by Betsy Hodge, St. Lawrence County Extension Learning Farm

Over the summer our staff was able to experience the ups and downs of moving portable net fences through all kinds of terrain. We went across swampy areas, over ditches, through thistles and nettles and over stone walls. We developed our own jargon to describe the fencing situations. Moving 16 or 17 rolls of netting takes patience and you definitely need a sense of humor. The following is a list of our favorite expressions used during fencing. Keep in mind that most times we were fencing with another person along to help lay out the fence or gather it up. Those interns and family members had to learn fast.

Fencing Team – This is not the varsity team with sabers, this is the interns and your kids that help you get the fencing done. However, we have been known to say “On Guard” when we are getting silly.

Buggy – The four wheeler vehicle with a bench seat and a box on the back that was crucial to our operation. It was an honor if Charlie let you drive the buggy...it does not resemble any buggy I ever encountered.

String or No Strings – The question you ask when you are getting a roll of fencing ready to lay out. One end has strings you use to tie the posts together at the ends. You want to come out right so that you can connect them all so you need to know whether to start with strings or no strings...which leads us to...

Flip It – what you do when you have no strings and you need strings...as in “watch out, I have to flip it”...which means back up or you’ll get the prongs in the face.

Pull – What the person does that takes one end of the fence and walks it along to perimeter. Pulling puts the fence out in a tight line that you can stand right up.

Slow Motion Fall - What you do when you are pulling and walking backwards and step in a hole...you slowly sink into the grass and there’s nothing you can do about it except laugh. Fortunately, it is usually a soft landing. Hopefully your foot doesn’t go through the netting and get stuck.

Hammer Lock - What you get when you have a hammer in the loop on your pants and you are stringing out fence and it gets all caught on the hammer and you can’t get the hammer out or the fence off. Variations include finger lock which happens when you are holding the fence while someone else is pulling and your finger get intertwined and won’t come out...and boot lock which happens when you get your foot through and the shoelace hooks on your boots get caught...can lead to the slow motion fall...

Macramé: What you get when you don’t roll up the fence carefully. The prongs get caught in the fence and the whole thing takes much longer to lie out. We say that roll of fence has a prongitude.

Overlap/Zig Zag: What you do at the end when you have a 20 foot gap and a 164 foot roll of fence to use up. You try to do the zig zag where the animals won’t get caught or confused by it.

Are we connected all the way around? – What we check every time when we are done by checking the fence with a tester at the beginning and the end. If you don't have a charge at the end you have to go all the way around the fence looking for that one place you didn't connect...it is always the farthest place from where you started.

Sneaking Through - What you do when you are trying to get through the honeysuckle on the knoll, or over the stone wall and through the brush, or under an existing fence. It takes some clever fencing to make it work.

Mad Cow disease – What we say the cows have when you put up new fence and then don't open up the new pasture for them until after lunch. They can make quite a racket! Sometimes they blat through the entire fence moving experience. Sheep are much better mannered and don't carry on like they are starving.