

Multi-Species Grazing/Electronet Fencing Demonstration Fact Sheet

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Basic Concept – Beef cows and calves and sheep with lambs grazed together in paddocks made with electro-netting of different kinds. Residency varies from three to five days.

Fencing/Pasture Basics – Premier electro-netting – tried three kinds – one prong short, two prong short – and two prong tall – The Favorite = two prong short (tall is heavy if you move it a lot, two prong can be stepped into the ground when it is dry and stands better in the wind).

Move it a lot –

- Everyone does it a little differently but basically it is important to do a good job taking it down or you pay when putting it back up!
- Taking down is harder physical work than putting it up.
- Can use lots of help to take it down but two to put it up is fine
- You need something like a buggy – a gator, four wheeler, etc.
- Water from the hose when possible, can use a wagon with tanks but you have to fill them regularly
- Charger from the barn when possible, ground already in place, no messing with the batteries. Make sure there is a charge ALL the way around!
- Battery chargers work fine. Have two marine batteries and a charger. One battery will last about one week. Charge the other one and then switch them.
- Flexible to adjust pasture size, split, etc. Easier than adjusting the number of animals.
- Good for mowing around bunks, buildings, lanes, horse ring, etc.
- Don't leave it in one place too long – it is hard to get out of the grass – especially the tall swamp grass. Fence gets wrecked and back gets wrecked.
- The animals get it – moving isn't as bad as we thought. New lambs or calves can make it more challenging. Calves can be hidden and left behind. Newborn lambs and ewes won't leave the birthing spot. Better if lambs are born before rotation starts. Have to be careful to find all the calves. Best if cows go first and then sheep. That's how they usually go on their own.
- Parasite control – cows eat the sheep parasites and vice versa.

Problems we thought we would have but didn't:

- Separating cows and sheep when needed – for de-worming, weaning, weighing, etc. Charlie can call the cows and I can call the sheep.
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- Cows stepping on sheep/lambs – most of the time they were good together as long as the cows went first through the opening to the new pasture.
- Keeping the animals in – don't take down the fence too soon...I started taking down the fence and swinging it around to complete another paddock and the cows took advantage of me...Must have a charge on the fence also.
- Getting water – hose worked well- liked that better than the tank set-up we had but have had good luck using a tank on a better wagon.
- Predators – those cows are scary- did not lose any lambs when the cows had calves. Lost one ewe when the fence was knocked down. Cows do not like the livestock guardian dog. LGD can work in a sheep electro-netting rotational pasture setting without cows.

Things to consider that we should do differently:

- Fly control – for beef cows especially
- Make a continuous pasture system so you don't have the “big change”. If you get to the end of your paddock system and it is a long way back to the beginning it is a pain to fence a lane to get the animals back to the start.
- Perimeter fence up – rest of fence down – old fences are in the way. Ideally there would be a good perimeter fence and that's it. Old partitions and fences affect where you can put your portable fence. Now we have no perimeter either – only use electro-net. Have a pagewire barnyard for sheep and one for cows.
- Get things cleaned up after animals go out – always plan to do it but rarely actually do it. Trees, big rocks, etc, can be moved in critical spots to make fencing easier.
- Mineral feeders – need something that can stand up to the weather and be moved easily. Still have not solved this problem. Cows eat a lot of sheep mineral and destroy most mineral feeders.
- Self-filling sheep tank – need splitter and float for sheep tank to eliminate bucket filling the shorter tank– for lambs. Have tried different things. Sheep can drink out of cow tank when it is full. Lambs have a hard time. Cows like to stand in the sheep tank while they drink out of the cow tank.