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Alpaca Predator Resistant Fencing

by Bill and Sherri Duey

Alpacas are a long way from the top of the food chain and therefore need protection from predators that can kill or injure them. Depending on your location, predators could include dogs (both tame and wild), coyotes, bobcats, wolves, cougars, and even bears.

Proper fencing can provide excellent protection from dogs and coyotes that are present in almost all areas. Fencing can also greatly discourage bobcats and wolves. Cougars and bears both require very special techniques that we will not discuss in this article – better to consult with your local Department of Wildlife officer (or equivalent).

In addition to providing protection from predators, fencing serves several functions on an alpaca ranch. These are:

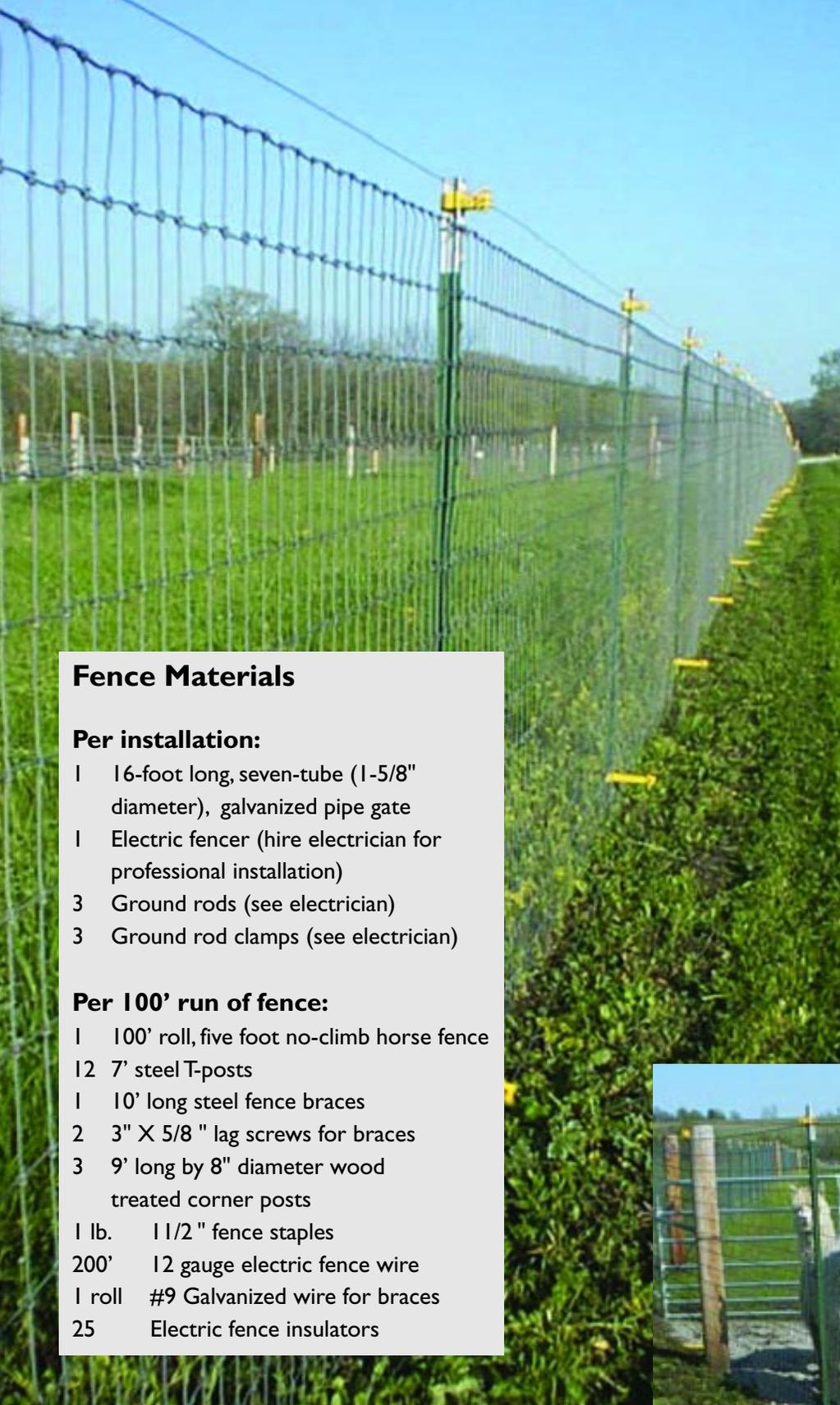
- a. Confine alpacas to a specific area.
- b. Separate herd sires and yearling males from breeding females.
- c. Quarantine alpacas being agisted.
- d. Define breeding pen areas.
- e. Allow flexibility in managing pastures by rotating alpacas away from overgrazed areas and onto under-utilized areas.
- f. Secure alpacas from people.

Many types of fencing are used on farms and ranches. These include wooden boards, plastic boards, chain link, high tensile (Australian fence), six inch by six inch woven wire (hog wire), welded wire, pipe, barbed wire, etc.

The fence we recommend for alpaca ranches is a wire fabric fence commonly referred to as “No-Climb Fencing.” We have installed and thoroughly tested thousands of feet of this fence on our ranch and find it performs very well. The design of the fence provides extra vertical rigidity, which prevents sagging.

This fence material has rectangular openings of two inches wide by four inches tall and comes in rolls of varying heights, and generally 100 or 200 feet long. The five-foot height is excellent for the perimeter fence and works for interior fences as well. The four-foot tall fencing is too short for external fencing and encourages alpacas to risk injury by neck wrestling over the top. We suggest buying the fence in 100-foot rolls as the 200-foot rolls are too heavy to handle. The fence is supported by eight inch diameter treated wood corner posts. Then seven foot tall steel T-posts are spaced every eight feet. A six inch diameter treated wood post is installed every 80 feet to add additional support.

A predator resistant fence should include a strand of electric fence wire about six inches above the ground and six inches outward from the fence. A second electric fence wire should be installed about two inches outward from



Fence Materials

Per installation:

- 1 16-foot long, seven-tube (1-5/8" diameter), galvanized pipe gate
- 1 Electric fencer (hire electrician for professional installation)
- 3 Ground rods (see electrician)
- 3 Ground rod clamps (see electrician)

Per 100' run of fence:

- 1 100' roll, five foot no-climb horse fence
- 12 7' steel T-posts
- 1 10' long steel fence braces
- 2 3" X 5/8 " lag screws for braces
- 3 9' long by 8" diameter wood treated corner posts
- 1 lb. 1 1/2 " fence staples
- 200' 12 gauge electric fence wire
- 1 roll #9 Galvanized wire for braces
- 25 Electric fence insulators

the top of the fence. Both of these electric wires are on the OUTSIDE of the fence to prevent predators from digging under or climbing over your perimeter fence.

Modern electric fencers are much more powerful than those made just a few years ago. Electric fence systems should only be installed or inspected by a certified electrician and MUST be properly grounded with the recommended number of ground rods. You should also be sure to attach plastic warning signs at frequent intervals along electric fences. As an extra safety precaution, turn the electric fencer off when you are working around the fence or expecting ranch guests.

The cost of installing a good fence is about 50% materials and 50% labor. Selecting the best materials is a very good investment.

The key to a good fence is in the strength and correct installation of the corner posts and braces. Properly installed corners allow you to stretch a fence to the proper tension and then hold it in position for many years. If the corners are not installed properly, the fence will sag or the corners will pull out of the ground, allowing openings for predators to get into the pen.



Above: Fence fabric referred to as "no-climb horse fence" with electrified top and bottom wires added makes for a very secure fence for your alpacas.

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pipe gate with no-climb fencing attached with UV resistant electric wire ties works very well. To prevent predators from digging under the

gate, a removable 4" X 6" treated board should be installed along the bottom edge of the gate. Insulators can be attached to the gate and the electric fence wire along the board. Insulated electric fence gate handles should be used at the gate on both the top and bottom wires.

A correctly installed alpaca fence can save you time, money, and give you great peace of mind.

About the Authors: Bill and Sherri Duey operate Southern Iowa Alpacas ranch located 60 miles southeast of Des Moines, Iowa. They have incorporated a number of innovative features into their alpaca ranch and are happy to share their experience in new ranch setup with alpaca owners or fine tuning of existing ranch setups. You may view their website at <http://www.south-erniowaalpacas.com> or contact them directly at alpacas@southerniowaalpacas.com