

Best Practice Information Sheet

Infrastructure management

Sheet 13.0a

Fences and gates

Why change?

Fences and gates are a vital part of efficient operations, particularly on livestock farms. If correctly positioned and designed they will give benefits including reduced animal disease risks, running costs and increased capital value. By taking action to build or renew fences and gates, you can:

- reduce costs
- protect vulnerable crops, banks, trees and other areas
- improve stock growth and health
- reduce time spent recovering stock
- enhance the rural environment.



Simple fences can increase profitability and reduce costs

Steps to success

1. **Review the current situation** by using your farm map to identify areas where new or repaired fences, and new or re-sited gates, could help with the operation of your enterprise including any permanent or seasonal requirements. Take account of factors such as terrain, access to site, usage requirements, boundaries, climatic effects, snow, flooding, natural bank erosion and pollution.
2. **Identify potential opportunities** such as:
 - banks of watercourses where stock access is increasing erosion and causing straying
 - stream crossings where stock may be injured, pick up diseases and cause pollution
 - drinking points to restrict access to watercourses
 - marshy areas where access may be most valuable in dry periods
 - new woodland
 - seasonal grazing including inside bankside fencing where gates will be needed
 - moving gates where they are a pathway for runoff from fields.
3. **Calculate the cost-benefit of these opportunities** by comparing the potential savings with the costs of providing suitable fences and gates. Identify the payback period.
4. **Prioritise the opportunities you have identified** by considering their cost-effectiveness and the benefits to animal health, as well as the reduced risk of pollution.
5. **Implement the action plan** taking account of:
 - costs such as labour, materials and grants
 - intended purpose and life of fence
 - maintenance requirements
 - stock drinking areas
 - flood areas where an electric fence may be most suitable.
6. **Check to ensure** that your fences are kept under review and any damage is repaired promptly.
7. **Monitor progress** to ensure that fences/gates are provided where necessary in order to achieve the benefits you have identified on your farm.

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Sheet 13.0b

Fences and gates - Practical examples

1. A farm in West Devon of 37ha with mainly improved permanent pasture, had unstable riverbanks, severe bank erosion and was losing valuable land. Fencing was recommended to allow natural deep-rooted vegetation to establish along the riverbank to reduce erosion, prevent stock crossing the river and improve fish habitat.

With grant assistance, a 225m multi-strand high tensile fence (flood resistant, and excludes cattle and sheep) and gate for access was constructed.

2. In 2008 a farmer in north Cornwall applied for an England Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative grant to fence an area of 0.5ha of wetland on his mixed livestock farm. This was done to reduce the incidence of foot problems he was experiencing in his herd/flock. 350m of fencing was erected. A gate was added to allow grazing only at dry times of the year as a management tool, and to ensure that his SPS area was not affected.

Cost of fencing and gate was £1500 less ECSFI grant of £800 = £700

Savings in terms of lameness £4/beast/year = £400

Payback is less than 2 years.

Additionally, the farmer was able to incorporate the fenced area as option EK4 under his ELS agreement giving additional payments.

Environmental Stewardship

Under ELS farmers can receive payments by choosing options that might involve fencing with access gates, these include: Taking field corners out of management (EF1 Arable land, EK1 Grassland outside of LFA's, and EK2 Grassland in LFA's) Management of Rush Pastures (EK4 outside of LFA's, EL4 in LFA's), and EC3 Maintenance of Woodland Fences.

Under HLS capital payments can be made for projects requiring fencing with access gates.



Riverbank fencing: Top - before Bottom - after

Remember

- There are considerable potential savings to be made through improved fencing and a reduced risk of water pollution.
- Plan and cost your fences and gates to match the circumstances, e.g. on land liable to flooding.
- Significant bankside works may need permission from the EA.

For further information: Defra (www.defra.gov.uk), Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk), ECSFDI (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/water/csf/delivery-initiative.htm>), Natural England (www.naturalengland.org.uk), Cross Compliance Helpline 0845 345 1302 (www.crosscompliance.org.uk) and ART (www.associationofriverstrusts.org.uk)



This information sheet is part of a series providing farmers with advice on land management practices to protect water bodies, produced by Association of Rivers Trusts with support from the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative. The advice will also enable farmers to use farm resources more efficiently and help meet Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and Soil Protection Review requirements under Cross Compliance and environmental regulation.



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