

Slick Way to Self-Feed Big Bales

Slickest system we've seen for self-feeding big bales is a simple do-it-yourself setup using an electric fence.

The idea comes out of Canada where it has been well tested on experimental farms and commercial ranches in the coldest and snowiest of conditions.

Agricultural engineer G. E. Padbury, Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, says there are two basic electric fence feeding systems: One involves a single strand of smooth or barbed wire hooked up to a standard electric fence charger. The other is a commercially-made double wire cable which goes by the trade name Posi-Shock, and which was first featured in FARM SHOW 2½ years ago. It's manufactured by William Crist of Crist Products, Wessington Springs, So. Dak. Both systems suspend the electric wire across a row of large round bales or hay stacks to control the area where the cattle can eat without trampling and wasting feed.

Padbury notes that the single strand electric fence around a feeding area is fast giving way to the Posi-Shock electric cable. Some livestock men have reported that, in dry and cold conditions, the single wire system does not shock the cattle because of poor contact with the ground wire.

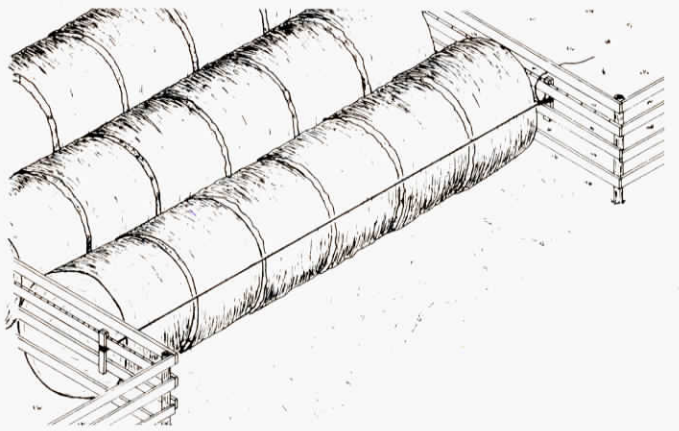
In contrast, the two-strand Posi-Shock cable keeps working in all kinds of conditions. The cable consists of alternately spaced "ground" barbs and "hot" barbs. It's energized by an electric fence charger. "The

shock individual animals receive is only at the point of body contact. It only gives them a sting — just enough to keep them away from the cable," explains William Crist, manufacturer. "Since it contains its own ground, it works regardless of what cattle are standing on, or the weather conditions."

Crist points out that Posi-Shock operation is much gentler and different than a conventional electric fence: "When cattle touch an ordinary electric fence, they get shocked throughout their entire body, which scares them away. If the ground is frozen or snow packed, they may get no shock at all and won't pay any attention to the wire. This doesn't happen with the Posi-Shock cable. It works in all kinds of weather, and doesn't scare cattle away." We had problems in extreme cold weather with the plastic covering we were using but have since switched to a new material that has performed flawlessly in extreme cold. We've also switched from aluminum to copper wire for improved performance."

Here, according to Crist, are some simple rules for using the Posi-Shock cable: It should be strung in a straight line and not around corners. It works best when connected to a fence charger that produces a long sharp spark.

For self-feeding big bales, the cable should be 30 in. off the ground and supported by a rod or stake placed in every second bale. Bales should be lined up to feed from the twine side, placed



close together. However, round bales should not be placed close together until after the rainy season is past.

"Posi-Shock cable sells for \$1.60 per ft. in the U.S. and right at \$2 in Canada," says Crist. "You will need about 1½ to 2 feet of cable per head for feeding hay and about 8 to 12 inches per head for silage."

One precaution in installing the cable is to leave about a 6-in. sag between each support. This prevents the cable from breaking when it tightens up in cold weather.

After installation, feeding takes care of itself. Most cattlemen say they only have to spend about 10 minutes a day inspecting the cable and moving it closer as the bales are eaten.

Says Crist: "You can use Posi-Shock cable in any situation where controlled feeding is desired. You can use it for feeding from stacks, bunks, trench silos or creeper. It can also be used as a pen divider or gate for all kinds of livestock."

In Canada there have been

some questions about the danger of fire in using electric fences for hay feeding. G. E. Padbury of the Saskatchewan Dept. of Agriculture checked this question with the Canadian Standards Association, which certifies this type of equipment.

"The association assures livestock producers that, when either a cable or straight wire system is installed properly and connected to the right kind of charger, there is no fire hazard," Padbury points out.

More details on electric fence feeding are available by writing to G. E. Padbury, Agricultural Engineering Services, Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, Administration Building, Regina, Saskatchewan.

For details on the Posi-Shock Cable, contact: Crist Products, William Crist, Pres., Wessington Springs, S. Dak. 57382 (ph 605 539-1231).

In Canada, contact: Crist Products Ltd.; P.O. Box 640, Broadview, Saskatchewan SOG OKO (ph 306 877-4406).

Self-Propelled 16-Row Corn Planter

One of the most talked-about new machines in Southern Minnesota is the 16-row, self-propelled corn planter that Robert Nelson and his son, Kim, of Dexter, built in their farm shop.

It's not a commercial machine yet, but has been field tested for two seasons with flying colors

and has attracted attention both from farmers and machinery manufacturers.

Wilson designed his own chassis and mounted two John Deere 8-row planter units on it. It's powered by a 671 Detroit diesel engine with 238 horsepower. The cab is mounted ahead of the engine and gives

excellent visibility of the planter boxes, and the field.

The "tractor" assembly has dual wheels and a single standard wheel in front, giving a tricycle design. Each 8-row planter unit is supported by caster wheels which are in position while planting.

"I built the rig with more power than it needs," says Wilson. "The 5-speed Spicer transmission is big enough for 300 horsepower and the engine delivers 238. It has a Euclid rear-end and air brakes.

"It has some special features, too. You can raise either 8-row unit out of the ground and plant with the other, or plant with all 16 rows. The row markers are controlled with independent hydraulics."

Wilson's planter is set for 30-in. rows. It's also equipped with liquid fertilizer tanks, one 300 gal. tank on each side of the cab.

For road travel, Wilson pulls two pins and the unit folds up to a 20-ft. width. Returning it to the planting position takes only about two minutes.

It took Wilson and his son, Kim, two months to build the planter in 1978 at an investment of about \$30,000. They figure a commercial manufacturer would have to charge \$50,000 to put a similar unit on the market.

Wilson is thinking about building another unit, but it may not be long until this kind of planter is in production commercially. This year, DeKalb Ag Research Inc., of DeKalb, Ill., is featuring the home-built Wilson planter in some of its seed corn advertising.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Robert Wilson, Rt. 1, Box 136A, Dexter, Minn. 55926 (ph 507 584-2202).

