

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
Game Division

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DEER-PROOF FENCES

During the last few decades, Michigan's deer herd has spread out and increased to the point that there are now deer in every county in the state. As this spread and the subsequent increases that followed took place, deer have become more common in areas that are predominantly agricultural. Specialized agricultural practices, such as muck farms and fruit orchards, have put wild land under cultivation in many parts of the northern deer range. Deer damage problems have become more prevalent as these changes have taken place.

A number of methods of controlling deer damage have been experimented with in Michigan and several other states. Most of the methods tried have been unsuccessful. The three methods of controlling deer damage most widely used in the state today are (1) shooting permits, (2) mechanical and spray repellents, and (3) deer-proof fences.

1. Shooting Permits

Permits to shoot marauding deer are issued by the Conservation Department whenever a farmer can show that he is suffering damage. This method of control is laborious, when large numbers of deer or any lengthy periods of damage are involved. It will serve as a measure to relieve damage until something more effective can be done, or it will work if only a few individual deer are doing the damage.

2. Mechanical and Spray Repellents

Mechanical repellents - exploders, buzzers, reflectors, lights, scare-crows, etc. - have been found ineffective, or effective for a few days only. Considerable

research towards developing effective chemical deer repellents has been carried on since the war. The repellents that are available have relieved about two-thirds of the damage to young fruit orchards in the Grand Traverse region. In most instances repellents are expensive and must be applied at frequent intervals. They are limited in their use. They are not recommended for use immediately before or during the harvesting of fruit and truck crops when they are often needed because of possible food contamination.

3. Deer-Proof Fences

The Game Division has experimented with over 20 types of electric fences. To date we haven't found an electric fence that is sufficiently effective to be recommended as deer-proof.

Of over 30 different types of woven and barbed wire fences tested, only two types can be recommended as effectively stopping deer. These two fences are shown in the accompanying diagrams. Following are cost estimates for these fences based on costs of experimental fences erected in 1951 and revised to 1954 prices:

<u>FENCE #1</u>		<u>FENCE #2</u>	
<u>94" woven wire fence</u>		<u>55" woven wire fence and overhang</u>	
Labor	\$1.00 per rod	Labor	\$1.00 per rod
Posts	.90 each	Posts	.60 each
Wire	4.80 per rod	Wire	3.00 per rod
Staples	.06 per rod	Staples	.04 per rod
		<u>Brackets</u>	<u>.38 per rod</u>
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TOTAL	\$6.76 per rod		\$5.02 per rod

Specifications for Fence #1 can be changed as desired if fencing of slightly difference height is available, so long as the fence is a minimum of 90" high.

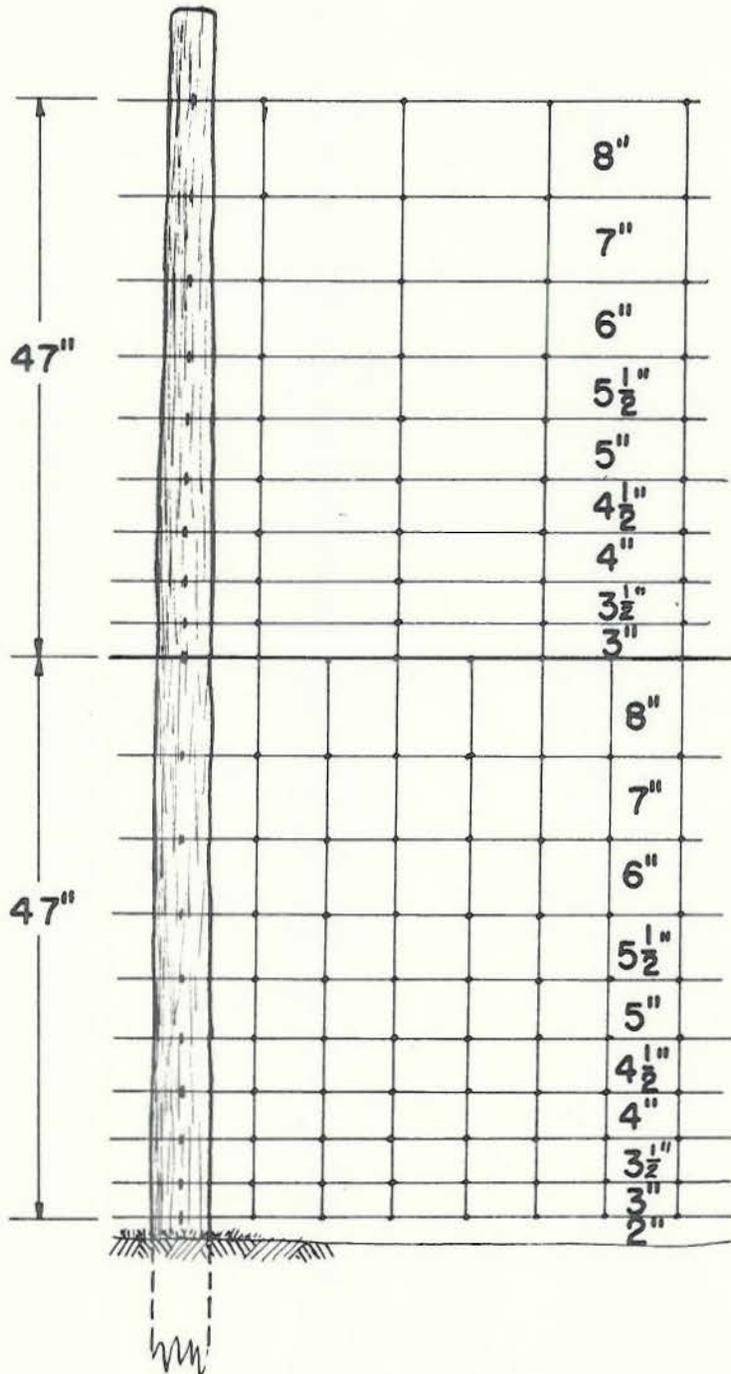
However, under no circumstance do we recommend a fence of lighter gauge wire or wider stays. Previously the Department has recommended a 90" fence which used 55" horse fencing. This fencing is now difficult to obtain; hence recommendations have been changed to the 94" fence pictured.

If economy is the primary objective, the 55" fence with overhang should be considered. Such a fence has repeatedly turned deer efficiently, but it has not been tested under all conditions as yet. It is the nature of a deer to walk up to a fence and "high-jump" it. The overhang apparently discourages this. But if a deer is being run by dogs, for instance, or is startled in any way, it may run at the fence and easily "hurdle" it. Or, an occasional deer may learn to jump the fence to get at food on the other side. Thus, it might be necessary periodically to shoot certain deer which get in. Of course, the overhang makes the fence a "one-way" guard, which allows deer that get in to jump out with no difficulty.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that proper wire be used in building deer-proof fences. Lighter wire with stays farther apart would be cheaper, but deer would soon break or spread wires until they could get through.

Although fencing costs are high and their use would be necessarily limited to high income crops such as fruit and truck crops, their cost pro-rated over the effective life of the fence would be cheaper and furnish better control than any repellents tested to date.

A RECOMMENDED TYPE
of
VERTICAL WOVEN WIRE DEER PROOF FENCE
FENCE No. 1



Total Height = 94"

10 Horizontal wires spaced
3-8" apart
47" High
12" Between stay (vertical) wires
9 Gauge top and bottom wires
11 Gauge mesh
Hinge joints

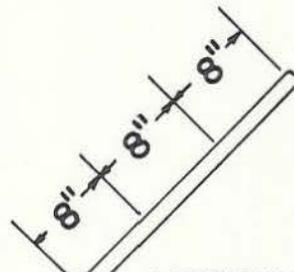
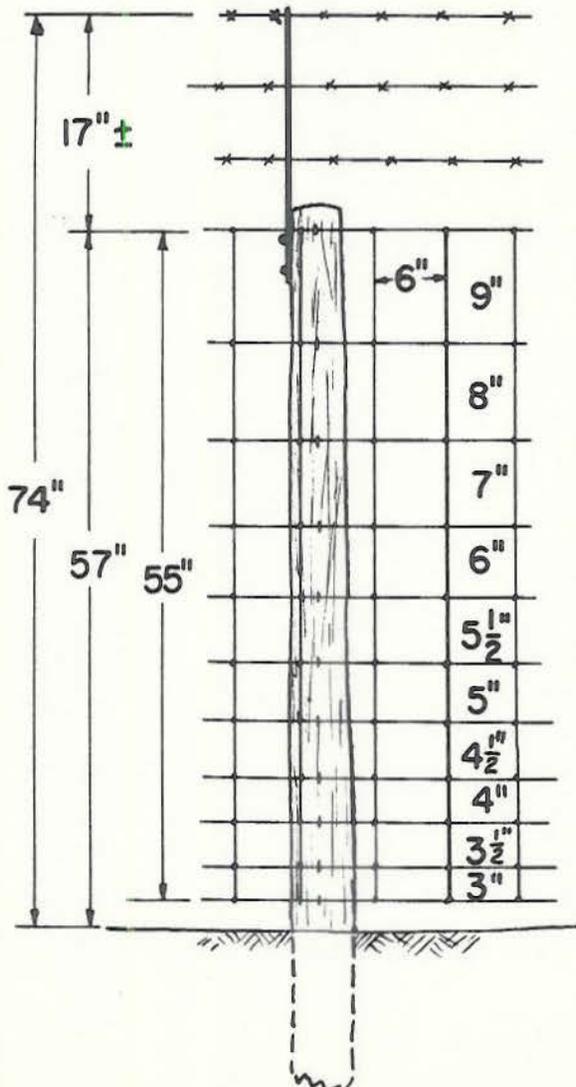
10 Horizontal wires spaced
3-8" apart
47" High
6" Between stay (vertical) wires
9 Gauge top and bottom wires
11 Gauge mesh
Hinge joints

EXPERIMENTAL DEER PROOF FENCE

FENCE NO. 2

BARBED WIRE OVERHANG

- 3 Horizontal barbed wires spaced 8" apart on 2' bracket
- 12½ Gauge wire with 14 gauge
- 4 point barbs spaced 4" apart



VERTICAL WOVEN WIRE

- 11 Horizontal wires spaced 3-9" apart
- 55" High
- 6" Between stay (vertical) wires
- 9 Gauge top and bottom wires
- 11 Gauge mesh
- Hinge joints