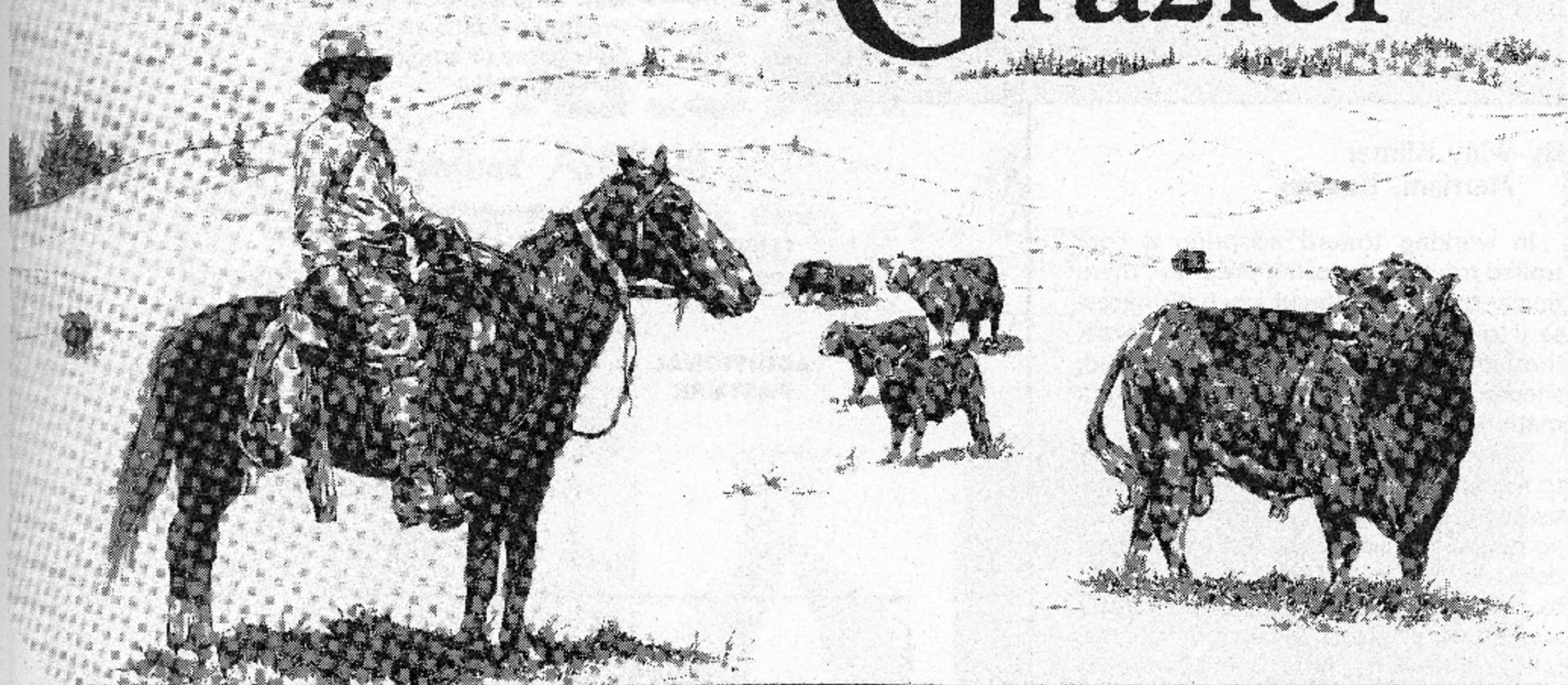


The Grazier



Look for more plastic fencing

By Chuck Huseman
Cedar Lake, Indiana

We all have what we consider to be some "front pasture" kind of cattle. Whether they are some transplant full sibs, our winning show/herd bull, or just a group of really good heifers, they make a good impression on visitors and passers by.

Almost as important as the quality of the cattle in the pasture is the appearance of the property itself. There are many more people that know the difference between a well-maintained farmstead and one just thrown together than there are who can tell good cattle from bad. The appearance of your property may just sell your cattle better than the cattle themselves, and the first thing one notices when viewing your "front pasture" is the fence that surrounds it.

Actually, any fence that's well-maintained can make a good impression on visitors, but it seems most people feel the ultimate in "show" fences is a well-painted board fence. You must admit the sight of rolling hills laced with black or white board fence is quite impressive. Then add those good black cows on a background of green . . .

"Hold on! Let's get back to reality," you say. "We aren't Lexington horse tycoons. How can the average cattle person afford these board fences?" Good question.

In examining the costs of board fencing, the initial installation costs are enough to make high tensile wire fence look really good. But the cost doesn't stop there. The major expense of a board fence is in the maintenance. Even if good treated lumber is used, it must be painted for the finishing touch that adds class to the fence. Then, even with the best paint on the market, the job will have to be repeated again and again.

But don't despair. There is a "show place" type fence even us cattle people can afford to own. It's a plastic fence!

As I said in last month's article, there are many "plastic" fencing products on the market. A few have been designed to resemble a board fence. These fences eliminate the need to paint and are almost maintenance free. The biggest drawback (until recently) has been that many of these fences, for a four "board" installation, can cost up to \$10 per foot—for the materials

alone! They do sell but very few of the customers are cattle people. In the past year and a half, however, we have been working with a new product developed by Signode Industries' High Performance Plastics division. It's called "Stock Strap."

Stock Strap is a polyester strap six inches wide and distributed in 1,000 foot coils. It's available in black or white and really has the appearance of a board fence when properly installed. But how strong can a 6-inch wide strap less than a millimeter thick be? Very strong. The data put out on this product states the breaking strength per strand at 6,660 pounds. What this means is that it will pull out the corner braces and end posts before the strap will break. (As a matter of fact, in working with this product I've found it physically impossible to apply enough tension to break a strap.)

The strap is tensioned with a well-designed device that stays right in the line for the life of the fence and can be retensioned over and over. The product is attached to wood posts with a galvanized bracket that allows the strap to move for expansion and contraction, or in case of livestock pressure, between posts. Since the strap was originally designed as snow fencing, cold weather has no effect on its durability. (I even dropped a piece into my semen tank, and when I pulled it out, it was still flexible.)

I have been very impressed with "Stock Strap" to this point. Since it's still in development and the pricing is still in question, the experimental jobs we have installed have been running around \$2.50 to \$3.00 per foot including good treated wood posts and labor for a 3-strap installation. The strap itself sells for about \$.20 / ft., brackets about \$.85 apiece, and the tensioners around \$9 each.

Stock Strap will never replace wire fence for containing cattle, but for those special areas where an extra fancy fence is needed, it could really be the answer. When the research is all completed and Signode starts to aggressively market this product, I'm sure you'll be seeing it around quite a few "front pasture cattle."

Down to the "nitty-gritty"

(Or let's blow away the foam and get to the beer)

By Willy Kilmer
Merriam, Kansas

In working toward adopting a controlled rotational grazing program, there finally arrives a moment when it's necessary to make some decisions. We'll walk through a case history and it's hoped, shed some light on what can be a traumatic experience.

Figure I is an actual layout presented to me for planning and installing a controlled grazing system. The owner and I agreed we would need at least eight paddocks in the main layout for the system to operate successfully. As previously suggested, an aerial or a relatively detailed outline of the proposed area is needed. Since the two existing areas were nearly the same size and roughly the same vegetation we decided to divide each into four paddocks giving us the desired eight.

Figure II represents the final plan and layout of the fence.

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- LEGEND**
- * * * Conventional fence
 - New or existing Hi-Tensile electrified fence
 - Proposed additional paddocks
 - △ New gates (3 cornered)
 - / Existing gates
 - ▨ Ponds

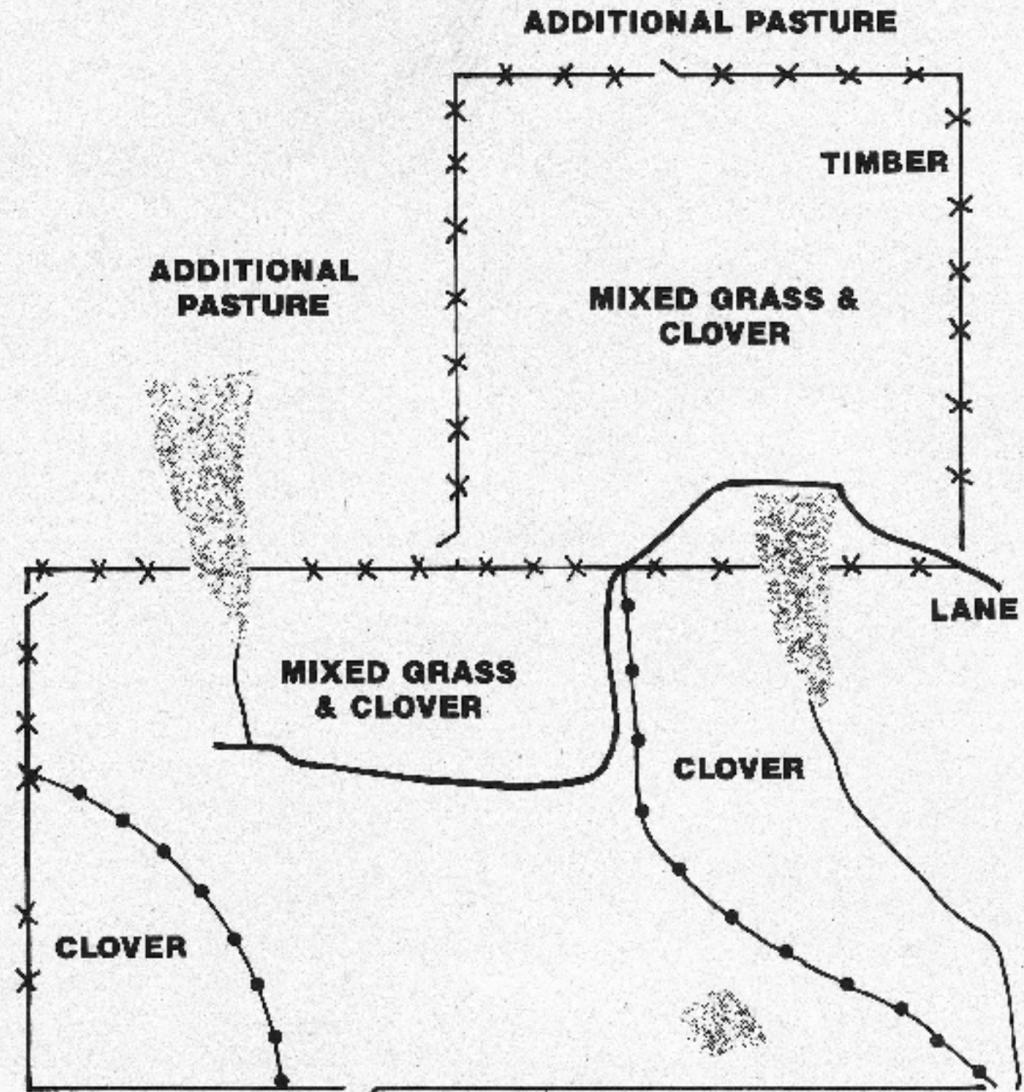


FIGURE I

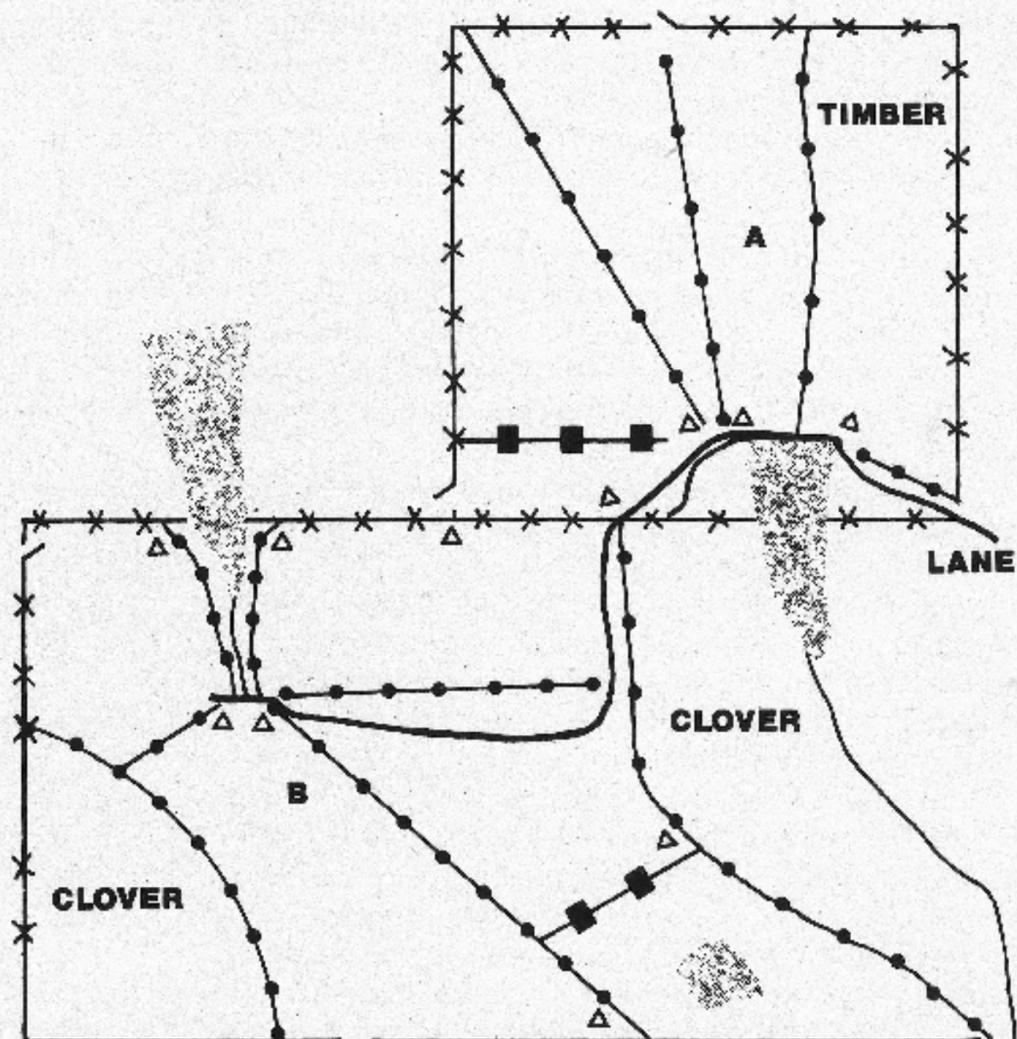


FIGURE II

GRAZIER . . . *Continued from Page 232*

One of the main features of the plan is what I refer to as a "butterfly" gate. I set three posts in a triangle. The cross-fence is attached to the middle post and the corral fence is attached to the other two. There are spring coil gates available that allow openings from a few feet to up to about 16 feet. I attach a handle to each end and then the gate can be switched around in three different directions. Using the spring coil gates eliminates the need for spacing the posts exact. Also, when not in use, they can be laid out of the way or thrown in the pickup and used elsewhere.

Another important feature of the cross-fencing is when only using a single wire, bracing the corners is unnecessary. I use insulating tube around the posts and when crimping the wire, I add a small loop and this becomes a handy place to hook the gates. A hydraulic post driver was available, so setting posts was rather quick and easy.

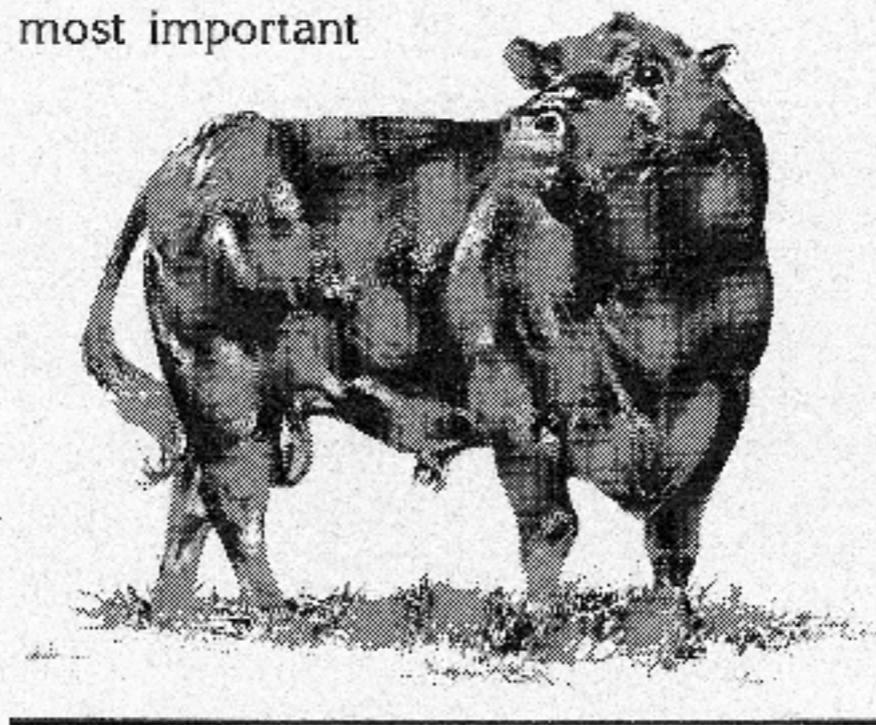
A couple of other techniques are employed routinely. In timber and brush there are usually adequate natural ends, corners, and posts available. There are nail-on insulators available which require

two nails. By using 3-inch or so nails, these can be fastened to live trees and by leaving them loosely nailed, the tree doesn't grow over them as fast as with the old-style single nail variety.

Needless to say, one would not do this on a thousand-dollar walnut but in many instances, holding up a wire might be the most useful function a tree will ever serve.

When using trees as ends or corners, I prefer tying off with porcelain insulators and again, they should be loosely applied so the tree doesn't overgrow it.

I can already hear the professional tensile fence builders moaning, groaning, and criticizing some of these short cuts. But, I'm convinced the most important



thing to do is to get the system installed so it will work and at the lowest possible cost. If hi-powered New Zealand-style chargers are used, if adequate insulation in the form of fiberglass posts and good insulators are used, if steel posts are avoided, and if a good grade of hi-tensile wire is used, a very satisfactory fence can be accomplished at low cost.

Now the fence is in and the cattle are turned into the first paddock. This can be done in spring, summer, or fall. When starting in the spring, the animals should be rotated through the paddocks quite rapidly. This will leave considerable growth in each paddock. If the rotation is too slow, however, the deferred paddocks will become too mature and lose a good deal of their value.

By moving rapidly, each is "topped out" and fresh green grazing will be available over a much longer period. Later the rotation can be slowed, and each paddock grazed more completely.

Now comes the payoff. One need only open one gate and close another while the neighbors are madly planting, harvesting, haying, hauling, processing, etc. We can blow away the foam and get down to where the beer starts. Good grazing!

AJ