FENCING

General

Deer can be farmed in most environments in Australia although enterprise development must consider the economy of scale required for a particular species in a specific location.

The cost of new deer fencing is often the greatest initial cost. There are many factors that influence the style of fence chosen for a deer farm. They include:

- Size of the area to be fenced
- Quality and style of any existing fences
- Topography of the site
- Availability of electricity
- Species of deer farmed
- The particular enterprise chosen
- Enterprise layout.

Enterprise Size

The minimum area for a commercially profitable enterprise is influenced by a range of factors that includes:

- Species farmed
- Enterprise structure
- Pasture quality and availability
- Cost and availability of supplementary feed
- Land value
- Distance from markets/processors.

Like most agricultural production systems, large enterprises offer more cost effective management and economics of scale that are not available with small enterprises.

Property Layout

As with more traditionally farmed species, property layout should take advantage of natural features of the property. For example paddocks for velveting males are ideally located in a situation where there is no visual or down wind contact with mating herds.

Control and ideal management of stock can reduce time associated with stock handling. Pasture damage can also be minimised with good management, especially that caused by males who 'miss out' during the rut.

Cost of fencing can be minimised by following existing fence lines and where possible, adapting existing fences. Fence costs can be significantly reduced if existing fences are suitable for adaptation for deer.

Shelter is important for deer. Young animals need protection from the direct sun in summer and from the chill caused by wind and low temperatures in winter. Trees planted for shelter can also provide a visual barrier between adjoining paddocks of animals but they need to be fenced to prevent direct access by the deer.

The farm layout should consider the need to move machinery along laneways and into paddocks. In principal, the laneways and gates should allow easy access for machinery and allow easy access for other stock that may graze the deer paddocks.

Paddock Size

Deer are usually more settled in large paddocks and they pressure fences less in large paddocks. Overall costs of fencing for an enterprise are less if large paddocks are used rather than many small ones.

Deer are said to be selective grazers that prefer the tips of the pasture. In large paddocks lactating females, and growing deer can be given access to the paddocks for initial grazing with little stress. Grazing by males and dry females can complete the grazing of the paddock, improve pasture quality and reduce parasite contamination.

Quality Assurance

Design of deer enterprises should take account of the recently developed Deer Farming Best Practice Program.

The aim of Quality Assurance (QA) programs is to produce consistently high quality product for consumers. Consumers alone determine the quality of product. It must meet their requirements.

QA programs are developed to encourage producers to undertake management programs that ensure highest quality products are available to consumers. They also remind consumers that the industry is committed to ensuring that client requirements are considered through all phases of product development from paddock to plate.

QA programs are based on 'best practice' principles. Adoption the of 'best practice' principles of the QA program usually results in an improvement in production efficiency that in turn leads to increases enterprise profitability and ease of management.

Consideration of QA should be a priority for those constructing new deer enterprises or expanding or upgrading existing enterprises.

The Australian Deer Industry Quality Assurance Board has trained assessors who can provide advice on QA and requirements for fencing and yards.

Regulatory Requirements

Deer farming in most states of Australia is governed by specific legislation. Minimum standards for boundary fencing are often controlled by legislation.

People should seek clarification of minimum standards for deer fencing prescribed by legislation in their state before construction begins.

Barbed Wire

Barbed wire should not be used in areas subjected to high stock pressure, including yards, fencing pens and laneways. It can be, and is, used successfully in paddock fencing where animals do not pressure fences.

A single strand of barbed wire at the bottom of the fence (ground level) can help deter predators from pushing under fences.

Specifications of Deer Netting

Deer netting is usually described by three numbers separated by a colon (:) or slash (/). The first number shows how many horizontal wires are used in the mesh. The second number shows the height (in centimetres) of the mesh and the third number shows spacing of the vertical wires in the mesh. For example wire mesh described as 17/190/30 has 17 horizontal wires in its 190 centimetres height and the vertical spacing wires are 30 centimetres apart.

Typically, wire mesh 190cm high is used in boundary fences and laneways. Mesh with 13 lines is typically used for Red and larger species deer while 17-line mesh is used for Fallow and smaller species deer.

Internal fences made with deer mesh are commonly made with mesh that is 150cm high.

Horizontal wires used in deer mesh are close together at the bottom of the fence and the space between successive wires increases toward the top of the fence. The close wires at the bottom of the fence limit the ability of fawns to escape and make it more difficult for predators to enter.

Choice of Netting

If deer netting is a preferred alternative, factors that influence the wire used include:

- Species of deer
- Fence location (internal, boundary, laneways)
- Environment (risk of rust/quality of galvanising)
- Strength of the knots used in the mesh
- Price per metre

Controlling Post and Fence Damage

During the rut male animals will rub their antlers (or buttons if antlers have been removed) against trees or other objects in the paddock. If the animals choose to rub against fence posts, the posts can be rapidly worn away until they break.

Figure 1: Damage to posts caused by male Red deer

Electric outriggers on permanent fences are useful modifications that can reduce pressure on fences created by males that are in the rut.

The outrigger also protects the netting from other stock that may be grazed in the deer paddocks.

Figure 2: Electric wire outrigger to protect posts

Gates

Commercially available gates are easily and cheaply extended to 1.8 metres by welding an extra section of frame onto the top of the gate. The frame is covered with deer netting.

Generally gates should be located in the corner of paddocks because:

- It is very difficult to encourage deer to move through a gate located in the middle of a fence (a 'hole in a wall')
- Corner located gates allow for long uninterrupted strains of fence wire
- Gates located in corners can be used to help move deer between paddocks

Figure 3: Gates enlarged for deer

Gates can be simply fabricated on farm with galvanised water pipe and weld mesh.

"V" Gates

To assist the ease of movement of machinery from the laneways into paddocks and to assist the control of deer movement along the laneways and between paddocks some owners construct a system of "V" gates.

In principal, the strainer for paddock fence that joins the laneways fence is set back away from the line of the laneways fence. The paddock gate that usually runs in line with the laneways fence is now angled away from the line of the laneways back to the fence strainer.

The gate on the adjoining paddock is similarly angled back to the division fence strainer post. The result is a "V" shape in the line of the laneways that provides more room to manoeuvre machinery in and out of the paddocks.

If gateways on either side of the laneways are constructed in a "V" style, a diamond section exists at intervals along the laneways. With appropriate

gates the diamond sections can be invaluable in controlling the movement of deer. In the diagram the gate hinge points are represented by the black dots.

Figure 4: "V" gates along laneways fence

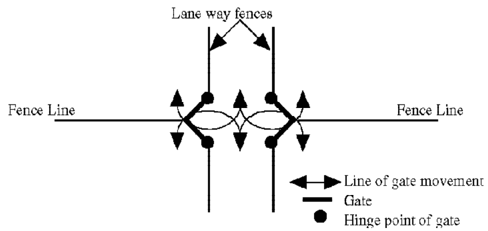

Diagram 1: "V" gates included in a laneways

Four-Way Gates

An alternative way to construct gates to ease movement between paddocks is to construct a four-way gate system.

In a corner where the paddocks meet, the strainer for each fence is set back a gate length from the corner. Gates are hung on each strainer and the join to complete the corner of each paddock. The gates can be opened to suit stock movement requirements and to allow a double gate access to each paddock for machinery (check machinery width before construction - some equipment is more than 6.0 metres wide). In the diagram the gate hinge points are represented by the black dots.

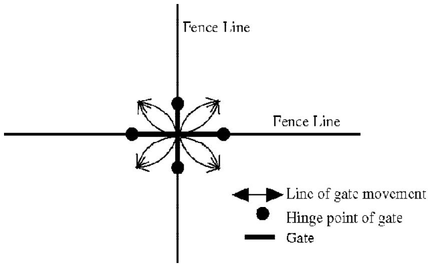

Diagram 2: A four-way gate system

Three-Way Gates

An alternative way to construct gates to allow double gate width movement of animals and machinery between paddocks is to construct a three-way gate system.

The strainer for each fence is set back to form an equilateral triangle. The length of each side of the triangle equals two gate lengths. Gates are hung on each strainer and the join to complete the corner of each paddock. The gates can be opened to suit stock movement requirements and to allow a double gate access to each paddock for machinery (check machinery width before construction - some equipment is more than 6.0 metres wide). In the diagram the gate hinge points are represented by the black dots.

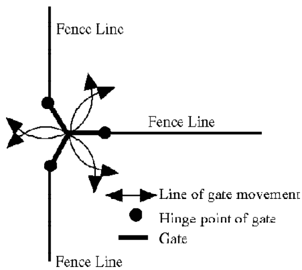

Diagram 3: A three-way gate system

Refer to *"Deer Farming Handbook"* for further information.