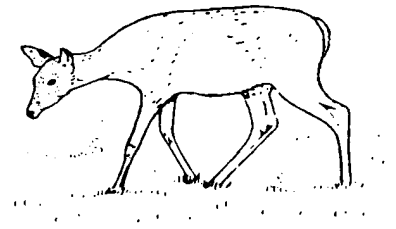


Deer and Agriculture In West Virginia



Deer Control in Home Gardens—Fencing

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Are deer a problem in your garden? If the deer population is low in your area it may be that repellents will keep them out (see **Deer Control in Home Gardens—Repellents**). If repellents won't do the job, consider building a fence.

Fencing your garden against deer can be accomplished in a number of ways. You make the choice on design and materials. Likewise you make the decision on the amount you wish to spend by the kind of fence you build. Modifications can be made to fence out other wildlife as well, such as rabbits, raccoons and groundhogs.

In areas where deer populations are low a single wire electric fence, 30 inches off the ground, can retard the deer. As the population increases, or entry through the single wire is apparent, additional wires should be added. (Figure 1). A vertical two wire electric fence should have wires located at 15 inches and 30 inches off the ground. If three wires are used, place the wires at 10, 20, and 30 inches off the ground. Small animals can be stopped by adding wires at 3 and 6 inches off the ground.

Another electric fence that has proven effective is a two dimensional design. A single wire at 30 inches is placed around the garden. A second set of two wires are located 38 inches outside the first wire at the heights of 15 and 43 inches.

Fences of these designs, vertical and two dimensional, can be erected by using hand driven posts and poly-type electric wire. This makes it possible to take the fence down and put it back up several times. Spacing between posts should not exceed 30 feet.

Electric chargers used range from low voltage cattle chargers to high voltage, low impedance chargers. The high voltage chargers do the best job since deer are harder to shock because of their hair structure.

Permanent, taller fences may be constructed. Certainly they provide more deer protection, but they are more expensive. Permanent deer fences which have proven successful are the high tensile electric,

6-wire vertical fence and the 8 foot high woven wire nonelectric fence.

Some very important points to remember if you decide to construct an electric fence around your garden are:

1. The natural habit of a deer is to go under or through a fence rather than jump it, unless excited or scared.

2. Should you put the wire up on your fence and not electrify it for several days, the deer may learn to go through it. When the electricity is turned on, some of the same deer will continue to go through the fence.

3. Deer that repeatedly go through an electric fence can only be stopped by elimination. They may, in fact, pass this behavior on to other deer if left alone to come and go as they please.

4. Check your fence every day, if possible, for breaks or any other problems that would permit the deer to enter. If deer have been a problem in your garden and you erect an electric deer fence, you can bet the deer are checking it every day for a way to enter.

5. It is very beneficial to have a way of testing the voltage on your fence. This can help you to correct problems such as a weak battery, poor grounding, shorting out, or a broken wire.

A temporary electric fence around your garden can greatly reduce the deer damage you are experiencing. A temporary fence gives you the convenience of taking it down each spring to plow and prepare the garden for another growing season. A temporary fence gives you the convenience of moving the fence should you move your garden. A temporary fence may be altered to control deer and/or small wildlife, even stray dogs. When using poly-type electric wire, breaks can be repaired by simply tying the wire back together with a square knot. When erecting your fence be sure to allow enough room between the garden and the fence to manipulate your garden equipment during summer cultivation. Also be sure to keep all vegetative material under or near the fence cut.

Posts for the fence may be wooden, metal or fiberglass. If wood or metal posts are used insulators are required. If fiberglass posts are used the posts serve as the insulator.

High voltage chargers are available in several different types: solar, AC plug-in, DC wet or dry cell battery, or six 1.5 volt flashlight batteries. These chargers generate approximately 5,000 volts of low amperage electricity and do an excellent job of turning wildlife. Prices of chargers vary considerably, so it is important to check around before purchasing one. For safety, lightweight signs should be attached to the fence alerting people to the fact that the fence is electric.

A garden of 5,000 to 8,000 square feet can be fenced with a temporary, electric deer fence for a reasonable cost. If properly maintained the fence can be used for several years with the only added cost being batteries. If wildlife damage has been a problem in your garden an electric fence might soon pay for itself.

Agricultural Extension Committee on Deer Damage and Control: Tara A. Baugher, Steven M. Carcaterra, W. Randolph Davidson, William N. Grafton, Thomas R. McConnell, Arthur W. Selders, Charles E. Williams, David J. Workman.

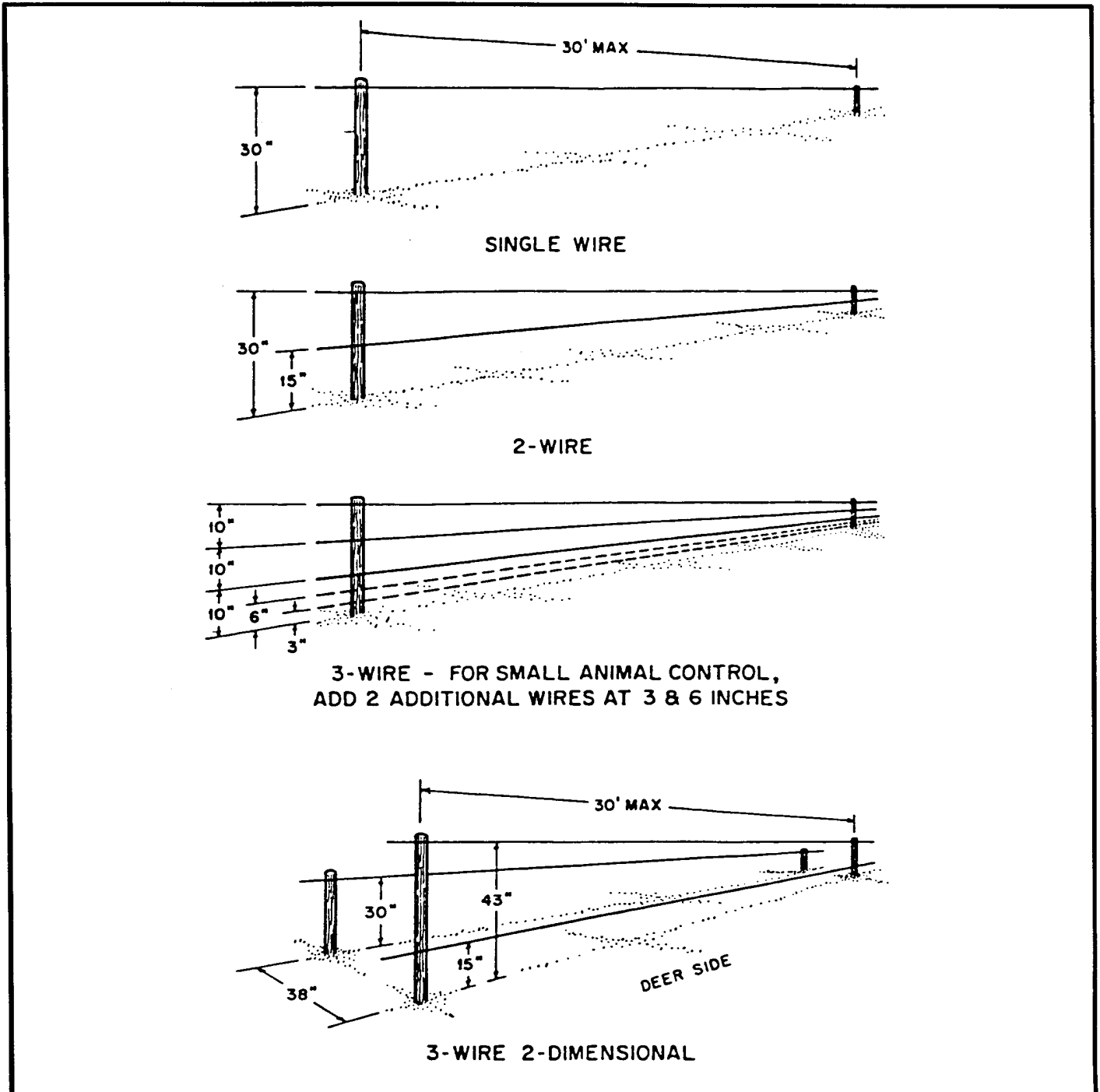


FIGURE 1. Fence Designs for Control of Deer in Home Gardens.