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Farm fencing hints - gates and gadgets

J A. Mallett
Department of Agriculture

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4—GATES AND GADGETS

By J. A. MALLETT

Apart from the fact that they add immeasurably to the appearance of a property, good gates are permanent assets—sound investments which pay generous dividends over the years, both in peace of mind and in the saving of many man-hours of valuable time.

When gates are unreliable, the stock cannot be depended upon to "stay put" and may roam with disastrous results to themselves or to crops. When a good animal becomes entangled in some of the barbed-wire atrocities which do duty as gates on far too many farms, its owner can easily lose a sum that would equip half a dozen paddocks with well-swung stock-proof gates.

When a farmer has to open and close a ramshackle gate three or four times a day on most days of the year, he is wasting time and effort which, in the aggregate, becomes a costly expenditure.

Undoubtedly, the factory-made, tubular steel gate fitted with vermin-proof mesh where necessary, is the best type of farm gate now available. Properly swung on sound gateposts, it needs little or no maintenance and will usually outlast its purchaser.

Admittedly, cost is a factor which we cannot always disregard and many farmers find it impossible to equip all gatesteads on a property with factory-made gates. It is a wise move however to install them as entrance gates, and wherever they are likely to be in fairly constant use.

Less frequently-used gates can be made easily on the farm from 4in. x 1in. or 3in. x 1in. timber, and Fig. 1 shows a few popular patterns. The uprights are doubled and the rails are sandwiched between them.

Where wide spans are needed, it is advisable to use two gates closing on to a central block, as long gates tend to lack rigidity unless they are very carefully constructed from stout timbers.

Using the 3in. x 1in. or 4in. x 1in. timber, with ½in. bolts and washers, strong gates up to about 9ft. in width can be constructed. Stout hinges of the "hook and eye" type should be used and it is a good idea to have the hook portion made long enough to go right through the post with a fairly generous length of thread so that adjustments can be made to overcome any sag which occurs.
In attaching the hinges it may be necessary to use spacing pieces, or to recess some of the timbers in order to provide a level base for the hinge. The diagonal struts may be duplicated to give extra rigidity and in rabbit-proofed paddocks this type of gate could carry netting but would need special attention so that rabbits could not pass under or around the gate. This would necessitate close fitting of the hinges, possibly with the addition of intermediate battens between the gatepost and the gate and also the fitting of a length of timber across the gateway to ensure that there was insufficient space for a rabbit to pass between the ground and the gate.

Such home-made gates if well constructed and, given a coat or two of paint, will give good service for many years.

Whatever gates are used, take special care with the supporting posts. Gates are usually swung on the strainer posts of the fence, but this method has little to recommend it save expediency. The tension of the wires is apt to cause movement of the posts unless they are exceptionally well stayed, and very little post movement is apt to be reflected in a considerable interference with the positioning of the gate.

Separate gateposts, preferably set in concrete, will help to keep gates properly swung, and ensure ease of operation and safe fastening.

"COCKY GATES"

In paddocks where the volume of traffic hardly warrants the construction of orthodox swinging gates, the wire-and-dropper affair commonly known as a "cooky gate" will often meet requirements.

If well-constructed and kept in repair, these will fill a gap quite satisfactorily, but all too frequently they are badly-planned and allowed to degenerate until one has to wrestle with odds and ends of wire to open them, only to have them collapse in an untidy tangle of wood and wire that is a menace to clothes and skin alike. Closing them is apt to be a two-man job with the result that they are often left precariously suspended and liable to fall down and become a danger to stock.

Even the "cooky gates" can be made reasonably safe and convenient to handle with very little trouble or expense. Obviously they should be taut when closed if they are to be effective.

Many of those seen on farms are merely secured by loops of wire at the top and bottom of the gatepost and when closing such gates one usually has to lift the bottom loop with one's toe, insert the lower end of the gate upright and then heave with might and main to bring the top of the upright to a position where the top loop may be slipped over it. The loss of sundry pieces of skin in the process is apparently regarded as a normal occupational hazard.

One step towards improving these gates is to make the bottom loop rigid instead of allowing it to dangle loosely. This is such a simple matter that I am surprised that it is not more frequently used. Simply bore two holes through the post, one about three or four inches above the other. Take a 5ft. length of fairly soft wire and pass it through the bottom hole, round to form a loop and then through the top of the upright. This will make the gate substantially more rigid.
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hole. It is brought round to form a second loop and then passed through the bottom hole again and this process is continued until you have a strong loop made of several strands of wire. Finish by binding the ends of the wire round the strands and you have a rigid loop which will last for years and into which your gate upright may be fitted with ease and safety. (See Fig. 2.)

An alternative to this method is to spike a section of heavy duty truck or car tyre to the post as shown in Fig. 3.

To secure the top of the gate upright any of the ideas shown in Fig. 4 will give good service. The use of a lever facilitates the tightening of the gate and all are so simple in construction that few written details are necessary. The levers are held in the "down" position by loops of wire or by a pin inserted in a hole drilled in the lever and the fence stay.

If you have any old main leaves from car or truck springs on the farm scrap- pile you could try out the idea shown in Fig. 5. Two lengths of \( \frac{3}{8} \) in. round iron are bent to form hooks and are then passed through holes bored in the gatepost in line with the "eyes" of the spring. The ends of the round iron are then bent over at right angles and engaged in the eyes of the spring which is then spiked to the gatepost. To enclose the gate the upright is hooked into position where it is gripped by the round iron and the action of the spring will hold the gate taut.

I have seen a similar effect obtained by utilising spiral springs from old drills. One of these is placed in position on each of the wires forming the gate and this permits the amount of "give" necessary to safely engage the upright in two suitable loops.

**SWINGING WIRE GATES**

Various inexpensive compromises between the "cocky gate" and the orthodox swinging gate may be seen on farms and a few of the more popular types are illustrated in Fig. 6.

Bush timber may be used for most of them and the ingenious use of forked branches will often aid in obtaining the necessary degree of strength and rigidity. They may be used to carry wires and netting.

Bush or sawn timber may be used in example A which is a simple V-shaped gate carrying one or more uprights. The hinges may be simply made from four eye-blots, two on the gatepost and two on the upright of the gate. A suitably sized steel rod passes through all four eye-bolts. Another pair of eye-bolts are used to make a catch for this type of gate. The point of the wooden V has a slot cut in it which slides over an eye-bolt or staple-shaped piece of round iron in the strainer post. The other eye-bolt is slipped through the loop to hold the gate in position.

Example B makes use of a forked branch with another narrower fork used as an upright to support the gate when it is opened. This sketch shows another simple gate catch made from a U-shaped piece of scrap iron drilled with two holes to carry a pin. Still another idea is shown in sketch C which only has a single diagonal support. This is a somewhat less rigid type of gate, but one that is quite satisfactory, and the drawing shows still another type of simple catch and

**FIGURE 3.**
FIGURE 4.

- Holes for pin
- Loop to hold down lever
- Loop
some improvised hinges. These are made by sinking a short log in the ground at the hinge end of the gate and drilling a hole to take a bolt with the head removed, or any suitable length of round iron. A stout board is spiked to the top of the gatepost and both this board and the top of the gate upright are drilled to take another bolt to complete the hinges.

EXTRA WIDE OPENINGS

The ordinary farm gates could often be made much smaller and therefore much stronger were it not for the fact that occasionally it is necessary to take wide machines such as harvesters, drills and combines into the paddocks.

A simple method of overcoming this problem is to have a removable panel of fence of a suitable length at the latch side of the gate so that a wide opening is always available when needed.

The strutted strainer post of the fence is erected at a suitable distance from the gate, and the extra panel is then attached to this post with the other end terminating in a removable post the base of which is shaped to fit into a length of 4in. or 5in. piping which should preferably be set in a concrete block. The illustration (Fig. 7) shows the details of this arrangement.

FLOOD-PROOF FENCES

Serious damage is often done to fence-lines during periods of unusually heavy rainfall when large volumes of water swirl through valleys and other low-lying land.

The floodwater cause debris to pile up against the fences in such quantities that eventually large sections of the fence collapse and become a tangled mass of posts and wire.

Damage of this nature may be minimised if sections of the fence in these flood-labile areas are made so that they will fall flat when subjected to pressure, allowing water and debris to pass over them. When the floods subside, it is a simple matter to stand the fence up again.

The best method of achieving this is to plant strainer posts at each side of the lowlying land and strut them firmly so that the section of fence between them forms an independent panel.

Ordinary fence-posts are erected at suitable intervals across the channel, say about 33ft. apart preferably spaced more widely than those in the normal fence. These posts should be sunk well into the ground and should only be bored with two holes, one about four inches from the ground and one about a similar distance from the top of the post.
FIGURE 6.

EXTRA UPRIGHTS MAY BE ADDED

A

B

C

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Stout droppers are used for the fence and they are bored at the normal spacings for the wires. Droppers could be spaced about 11ft. apart so that every third dropper coincides with one of the posts.

The bottom wire of the fence is run through the posts and the droppers. All the other wires are threaded through the droppers only, which are tied firmly to the wires.

The droppers which coincide with the posts are tied to the posts by tie-wires passing through the top holes of the post and round the droppers. In periods when floods are liable to occur, the tie-wires may be loosened so that they are only lightly held by one or two twists.

Any extra pressure on the flood-proof panel allows it to fall flat but it is held in position near the posts by the bottom wire. The ends of the panel may be firmly secured to the strainer posts as, on a panel of any length, the sag of the wires and the weight of the droppers will allow the fence to drop flat over most of its length.
IRRIGATION EXPANSION

During last season in the irrigation areas, 1,184 acres of land have been graded, the bulk of which has gone into immediate production. This is a record for the irrigation areas as in the previous highest year 925 acres were graded.

Government power graders handled 849 acres and a further 335 acres were graded by private contractors and the farmers themselves. This must be considered a particularly fine effort when the amount of work involved before and after grading, plus seeding and watering are done in conjunction with the every day activities of a dairy-farm.

In the irrigation areas from Waroona to Dardanup the following areas were brought into use:

- Vegetables: 47 acres
- Potatoes: 132 acres
- Fodder Crops: 245 acres
- Annual Pasture: 164 acres
- Irrigation: 423 acres
- Fallow: 173 acres

Total: 1,184 acres

The total area now sown to permanent irrigated pastures stands at 14,765 acres which is an all-time record and still another record was achieved this season when 1,261 acres were established as irrigation pasture.

The expansion of our irrigated pasture is one of the methods of securing for Western Australia not only increased whole milk supplies but a greater output of butter and cheese. The figures quoted provide evidence of a splendid achievement brought about by excellent co-operation between the Public Works Department and the farmers of the irrigation areas plus a very fine job of work done by the officers of the Irrigation Branch of the Department of Agriculture stationed in those districts.