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Fig. 1.—A fence following either side of this stony ridge causes no inconvenience to cultivation or soil conservation practices

FARM PLANNING

2.—Fences for Efficient Grazing

By B. a'B. MARSH, Agricultural Adviser, Soil Conservation Service

FENCES can last a lifetime; if they are badly placed they can be a source of frustration for a lifetime. Until they are replaced, they directly and indirectly cause soil erosion and they also obstruct the measures necessary to cure that erosion.

Fences are used to control and confine animals. Fences, therefore, should be placed so that good grazing management is possible. Because grazing management is an essential part of soil conservation, it requires that the type of country, availability of water, movement of stock from place to place and area, all be considered when locating fences. While fences control animals they also tend to impede cultivation and other practices. Fences should therefore be placed so that cultivation is not made inconvenient or likely to cause erosion. Most fences can be kept out of the way of cultivation and contour practices by placing them along natural cultivation boundaries such as creeks, water-courses, rocky ridges (see Fig. 1) and boundaries between land types requiring different cultivation treatment.

Grazing control can be helped by fence planning in several ways. On most farms good grazing control is hampered by

poorly placed fences (fences which have been placed early in development and now have no logical reason for being where they are). Watered paddocks are often overgrazed while stock from nearby dry paddocks travel to water. Salty areas are overgrazed to complete bareness simply because they are included in paddocks of normal soil which can be grazed more continuously than salt land (see Fig. 2.)

Several points to consider when planning fences for stock management are described below.

1. **Saline land** can often be more productive for grazing if the salt area is excluded from other land by the use of fences. This allows salt-tolerant pasture plants (and there are many) to become established and the grazing of them to be controlled in such a way that the pasture maintains or increases productivity.

Large areas of such land, unfortunately, seldom have stock water available and as it is best grazed in summer, provision should be made to reticulate water from outside the area.

2. Poor sandy country, where it occurs in large enough areas to warrant special treatment, should be fenced so that it can receive the very careful grazing it needs. It is usual for good quality water supplies to be found in these sandy areas, with the result that they are heavily grazed in summer when the vegetative cover on the ground is brittle and the sand dry and liable to blow. Water should be reticulated out of these sandy areas during summer.

3. Non-arable country, too steep or stony for cropping, usually occurs in small areas. If these areas extend over a long distance and form a barrier to cultivation, they can be considered as possible fence lines, fence lines which will be completely out of the way of cultivation and contour practices. If these non-arable areas are large enough to be grazed as separate units, then they should be fenced and watered and grazed separately. If large areas are not fenced from land which is cropped, then during the year of

cropping the non-arable area is lost from grazing.

4. Water supplies must be available to stock in every paddock. If paddocks do not have water, gates have to be left open and the trampling by stock causes erosion damage. Efficient grazing is only possible with water supplied in every paddock.

When fences are placed along natural boundaries as suggested in this series of articles, it is often found that water supplies occur near these fences, for example in drainage lines and near the boundary of sandplain country. Fences should be taken near water supplies so that reticulation is not made costly. Subdivision should be arranged so that no paddock is short of water.

When carrying out subdivision planning, it must be remembered that fences are to control and confine animals; there is no need to separate soils requiring different erosion control treatments.

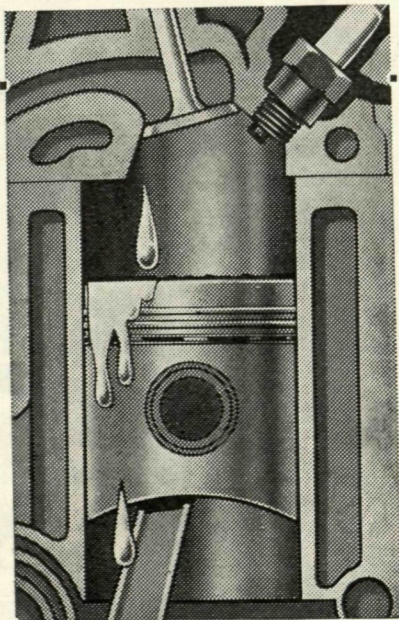
Fences are for efficient grazing. Fence then according to the factors which make grazing efficient. While doing so, try to keep the fences out of the way of other farm practices. Remember, if there were no animals, there would be no need for fences.



Fig. 2.—The salt in the foreground grows nothing; it could be made reasonably productive. The fence serves no logical purpose, and it has since been replaced along the salt boundary where it can be used to allow correct grazing, safe cultivation and safe firebreaks



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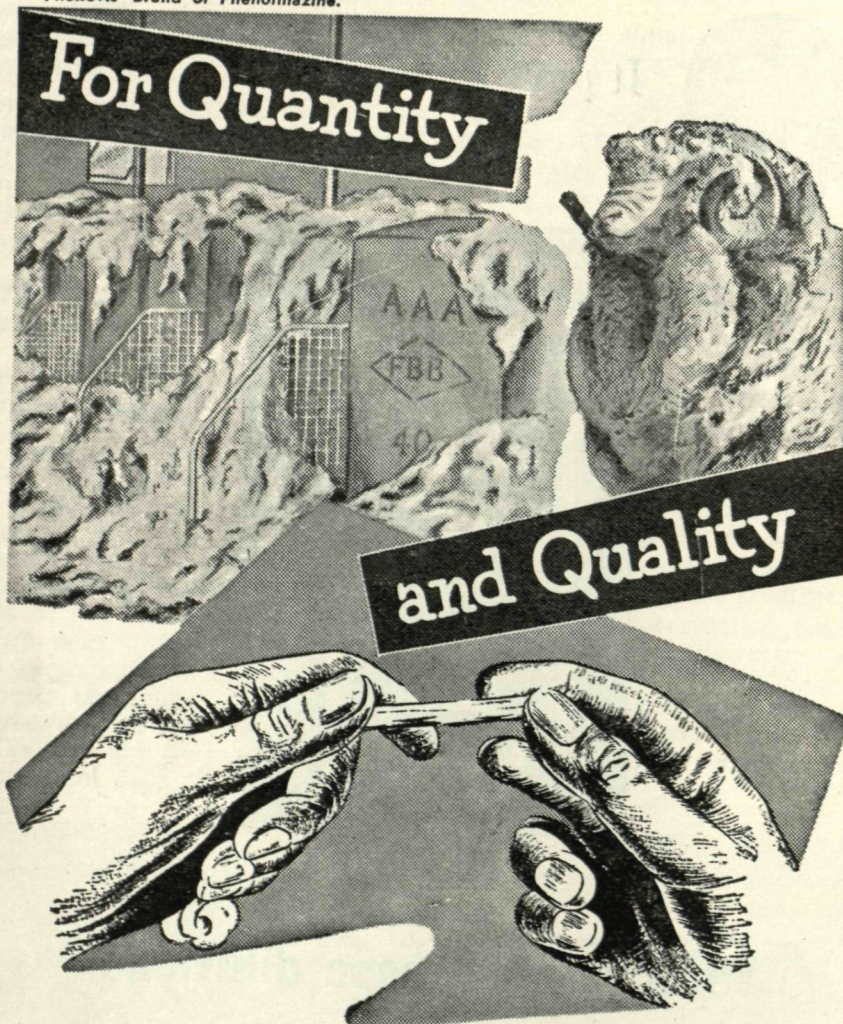


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