



# *The Weekend Farmer*

e-Newsletter for Small Farm Producers in  
Southwest Wisconsin

A University of Wisconsin – Cooperative Extension Newsletter

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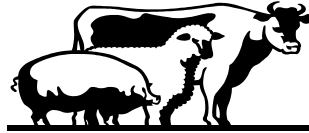
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## In This Issue:



## **Livestock Lessons:**



A Fencing Primer – *Gene Schriefer – Interim  
Agriculture Educator, Iowa County UWEX.* Is it  
time to build fence? Gene will give you the basics  
for making fence.

## **HORTICULTURE HINTS**

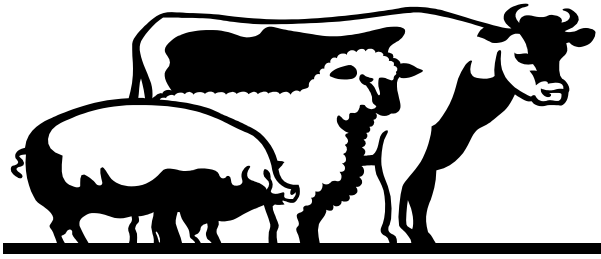
Composting – Easy as 1,2,3 – *Diana Alfuth  
Horticulture Educator – Pierce, Polk Counties.* Walk through an  
Introduction to backyard compost for the yard and garden.



## **Money & Markets**

Direct Marketing Meat – Adapted from *University of  
Wisconsin Publication A 3811-15, w/ permission from Rose Skora.*  
Take a look into some basic tips and strategies to Direct Marketing  
Meat products

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## Livestock Lessons

### A Fencing Primer

By:

*Gene Schriefer*

Interim Agriculture Educator- Iowa County UWEX

There are several reasons why a landowner might choose to construct a fence. Fences contain livestock and other animals, they can also exclude livestock and other animals, and in other cases the land owner might consider a fence esthetically pleasing.

The options range from a single wire of electric to a 5 rail board fence and all points in between. The decision depends upon goals and budget. For purposes of this article, I'll confine it to livestock fences.

All landowners are responsible for ½ of the fences on property lines even if you do not own any livestock and is governed by Wisconsin Chapter 90, available on line at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/statutes/1981/81Stat0090.pdf>.

Broadly speaking, fences can be broken down into 2 categories, physical fences and psychological fences. Physical fences include barb wire, woven wire, board fences, etc. They create a visible and physical boundary limiting livestock movement. They also need to be constructed stronger than the animals they are designed to contain, as the animals may choose to rub on or reach through or over the fence to graze on the opposite side of the fence. Think about a 1200-1400 pound cow with her head reaching through a traditional barb wire fence, or a 1000 pound horse reaching over the fence.



The second fence, a psychological fence, is not physically strong. These are electric fences and they operate on a fear or avoidance principle. Animals that have contacted a sufficiently energized electric fence incur a sharp painful shock causing them to choose to avoid future pain and thus avoid contact with the fence.

A physical fence will be more expensive to construct than a psychological fence, the costs are additional materials to add strength to resist animal pressure and more labor to install the fence.

A couple other key ideas to keep in mind as you plan for a fencing project. On a per unit basis, a larger field is cheaper to fence than a smaller field. If you own 1 acre, and its square, it will take about 835 feet of fence to enclose the property. If you own 5 acres and its square, it will take about 1867 feet to enclose it. Just over twice the perimeter gives you 5 times the area, fencing a 40 gets cheaper still on per acre basis. Outside of a circle (which is highly impractical) fencing something square is the least amount of materials compared with long and narrow fences and is therefore less costly. We may not always be able to fence square, but from an expense standpoint, we should do so wherever possible.

Other issue to consider might be safety. Do you live along a very busy highway were loose animals would be a threat to public safety and themselves? A good perimeter fence is essential. You do not want loose livestock at your neighbors, nor on public roads, this represents a liability. If they are loose but are still on your property, while annoying, it isn't the end of good relationships with neighbors. Are you in a higher predator area? Fencing can be part of a deterrent system, but few fences are 100% effective to all predators, at least that we can economically construct.

If you are planning on building a lot of fence, and have time and some skills, it is something that can be learned. If not, there are numerous skilled contractors that can be hired to build fence. They have specialized tools and experience, allowing them to complete projects quickly.

Regardless of the type of fence, occasionally we run into an individual that simply has no respect for any type of fence we can affordably construct. I've had a bull that way and a couple sheep over the years. The best bet is to administer a full dose of "trailermycin" before they "teach" the other herd or flock mates this trick.

Here are some examples of fencing that can work for different livestock.



Single wire, High Tensile Electric  
Dairy Cows, Possibly Beef Cows, Possible Stockers. Not a legal boundary fence in WI.  
\$



5-Wire High Tensile – Middle wire electric  
Dairy, Beef, Horses  
Sheep/Goats - 3 or more wires need electric.  
Can be a legal boundary fence  
\$\$



5 Strand barb wire  
Dairy, Beef, Horse  
Can be a legal boundary fence  
\$\$\$



Woven wire with electric offset  
Dairy, Beef, Horses, Sheep, Goats  
Can be a legal boundary fence  
\$\$\$\$



Four Rail Fence  
Dairy, Beef, Sheep, Goats  
Can be a legal boundary fence  
\$\$\$\$\$\$

## New University of Wisconsin Extension Fact Sheets Available



University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension Livestock Team is releasing a series of fact sheets titled *Raising Animals- Enriching Rural Life*, “A Guide to Raising Healthy....”

This series of fact sheets is designed to answer the basic questions of livestock production in rural settings. Species that will be covered are Chickens, Swine, Sheep, Horses, Goats, and Beef Cattle. To date the Chickens (A3858-01), Sheep (A3858-02) and Swine (A3858-03) are available through UWEX Publications <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/index.aspx> or through your local extension office.

The rest of the fact sheet will be available through out the summer.



### HORTICULTURE HINTS

## COMPOSTING EASY AS 1, 2, 3!

By  
*Diana Alfuth*

Horticulture Educator – Pierce, Polk Counties UWEX

Composting is a great way to reduce waste and recycle nutrients into a great soil conditioner for your yard and garden. Adding compost to your garden improves the soil and feeds your plants. While most people agree that composting is a good thing, many don't know how to get started, or think it's a complicated

process. But composting doesn't have to be complicated.

Composting is a natural process that will happen with or without our help. It involves tiny little microorganisms like bacteria and fungi, along with insects and worms, breaking down dead vegetation and releasing the nutrients that have been stored in the plants. These tiny insects and microorganisms begin to feed on the plant matter as soon as it is added to the soil or a compost pile. Because of the good food supply, the population of microorganisms increases rapidly, and this population explosion is what causes a compost pile to heat up. As the microorganisms die, they become part of the organic material. The end product of decomposition is rich, dark humus, which is the component of soil that makes it appear dark brown or black.

There are 3 things the microorganisms need to do their work: warmth, water and oxygen. If you can provide these 3 things in your compost pile, you will be producing your own great soil conditioner in no time.

Yes, composting can get complicated and very scientific. You can worry about the carbon and nitrogen levels of the materials you add to your pile, and you can turn it every day, add supplements, and spend a lot of time and effort on your composting! But you can keep it simple and still get good results.

Start with building your pile. You can add any kind of plant material to your pile, such as grass clippings, leaves, pulled weeds (before they go to seed!), sawdust, straw, wood shavings, manures, kitchen vegetable wastes, etc. Any kind of plant material will eventually decompose.

You can just toss these things on your pile as you create them, and eventually, you will have compost. If you want to take it a step further to get compost faster, think in terms of “brown” and “green” materials. For every part of “brown” stuff you use, try to add two parts of “green” stuff! “Brown” stuff includes dried

leaves, straw, sawdust, etc. “Green” stuff includes grass clippings, kitchen fruit and vegetable waste, and newly pulled weeds.

You can also throw a shovel full of soil on the pile occasionally to be sure you have a good supply of microorganisms in the pile. Normal decomposition takes 12 to 18 months, but you can speed it along by chopping the materials into small pieces before adding them to the pile. This can be done by running a lawnmower over the materials, or using a chipper/shredder. And, try for a pile that is a minimum of 3 feet high and 3 feet square for best results.

Once your pile is created, do your best to provide the three important components. The first component, warmth, is pretty much out of our control. Our compost simply isn’t going to do much decomposing when it’s frozen solid!

The second component, water, is very important. Keep your compost pile moist, but not wet and soggy. Let the rain fall on the compost pile, and between rain showers, dump a bucket of water over the pile or sprinkle it with the hose when you get a chance.

The third component, oxygen, is important because the microorganisms responsible for creating your compost need oxygen to survive. This is where turning the pile comes in. If you can stir the pile at least once a week, your pile will compost much more quickly. Turning the compost pile not only adds oxygen to the center, it also mixes the coarse, dry material from the edges and any new additions into the pile. If you never stir your compost pile, you’ll still get compost, it will just take a lot longer. That’s all you really need to know to get started in composting!

Sure, you can put a lot of thought and effort into composting, but if you don’t have time for that, you should still have a compost pile. Compost happens, with or without our input. Just pile your vegetative kitchen and yard wastes on a pile, and eventually, you will have compost. The more effort you put into it, the sooner you’ll have that compost to add to your soil in your vegetable and flower gardens.



## Money & Markets

### Direct Marketing Meat

Adapted from: *University of Wisconsin Extension  
Publication A 3811-15,*

Full Color Publication be downloaded from:  
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/A3811-15.pdf>

Whether you are currently a meat producer, or thinking of starting a livestock business and selling directly to consumers, there are some important things to consider. Selling meat directly to consumers is completely different from selling animals through commodity market outlets such as auctions, livestock sales yards or commission agents.

The good news is that more and more consumers are demanding to know how their food is produced and are willing to pay for a high-quality, local product that meets their food safety, health and animal care standards. However, there is a reason why not all meat producers have made the switch to direct marketing. By virtue of its description, direct marketing involves taking out the middleman. Someone needs to take on the roles that a middleman plays including processing, packaging, labeling, marketing and distribution. Being prepared to take on those roles or having another member of the family or business take them on is key to becoming a successful direct marketer of meat.

#### Rules and regulations

When selling meat directly, whether it is on-farm, at a farmers’ market, to stores and restaurants, through a web site, or through other sales outlets, there are a variety of local, state and federal rules and regulations of

which you need to be aware. Additionally, you may need to get one or multiple licenses based on how you are selling your product. The Division of Food Safety can also provide you with the information you will need to include on the product labels.

### **Processing**

In some parts of the state, finding adequate processing facilities is becoming an issue for meat direct marketers. If you don't have a relationship with a processing plant, it would be advisable to begin looking into options sooner rather than later. Start having discussions with potential processors about the number of animals you will need processed. Can they handle the number you would be bringing? Once you develop a customer base, you don't want to lose customers because your processing facility can't keep up with your demand.

Ask if they are willing to work with you on specific or different cuts of meat, and if they will collaborate on recipes for processed products, and are they willing to work with you on different packaging and labeling options.



### **Marketing**

It is critical to find the right person who will be the "representative" for your business. This will most likely be the primary person with whom your customers and business associates interact. If this person isn't friendly, honest, extremely knowledgeable and willing to actively seek out sales and customers, you may not have a winning combination for a successful business. This person is a crucial element to success.

### **Marketing research**

Along with finding the right person to represent your business as a marketer, you will

need to find out what your market is. Who is your target customer? What is your product? Will you be focusing on wholes, halves and quarters or supplying a variety of cuts? Do you want to sell on-farm, at farmers' markets or to restaurants and grocery stores? Why will a potential customer buy from you and what products will they buy? While time-consuming, market research is another key component to success.

### **Distribution**

Distribution is a challenge faced by many direct marketers. It's even more complicated for meat marketers because refrigeration or freezer space is necessary if you will be transporting your product to other locations. Once you identify your target customers and how you will reach out to serve them, you should determine how you will get the product to them. Some farmers carry freezers on a trailer and set them up at farmers' markets; others carry their products in large coolers; still others have made the switch to a refrigerated vehicle. You need to decide what works best for you. Keep in mind that this is another area where you'll need to work with a representative from the Division of Food Safety to make sure you comply with local and state regulations.

Direct marketing meat has a strong future in Wisconsin and many existing farmers are having incredible success with it. For further information about direct marketing meat in Wisconsin, the publication *Direct Marketing Meat* (A3809) serves as a complete guide and includes detailed information about rules and regulations, marketing, processing and much more. It can be downloaded from the UW-Extension web site at [cecommerce.uwex.edu](http://cecommerce.uwex.edu). Click on Agriculture" and then "Direct Marketing."

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