

Watercourse Fencing

Strategically located fencing along water courses will provide the following water quality related benefits:

- Remove direct access from livestock and introduce greater management control e.g. light summer grazing on more sensitive areas reducing poaching.
- Protects and stabilises the riverbanks as a result, allowing vegetation to establish, which capture and reduce soil and nutrients being mobilised and lost, also mitigating the level of erosion extending into the field.

Other benefits include:

- Contributes to making fields stock-proof, limiting incidents of lost/straying stock, associated injury etc..
- Boosts biodiversity provision on banks and in-stream, reconnects wildlife corridors providing habitat for flora and fauna.
- May be used in conjunction with Buffering or Woodland Planting and Management to deliver a greater level of combined benefits as above.



Installing Watercourse Fencing

| | Guidance |
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| Where | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alongside any water course where there is direct access • Foot slopes and large marginal areas • Ensure a suitable buffer of 5-10 meters between the water course and the fence |
| What | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treated timber and steel stock netting &/or wire between field and watercourse margins • May require access options built in for ongoing management of site • Materials need to be of approved standard and maintained over time (usually 10 years) |
| How | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use softwood timber that is fully peeled, coated with wood preservative and pressure treated, or treated with an approved preservative - untreated durable timber can be used as set out in the Forestry Commission guide to forest fencing • Put up a steel wire mesh fence at least 1.05m high • Use additional strands of galvanised steel wire (plain or barbed) if you need extra height as appropriate for stocking need • Use straining posts that have a top diameter of at least 125mm, or are 100 by 100mm in cross-section when sawn • Make sure the straining posts are 1.85m long if set in concrete and 2.15m long otherwise • Place the straining posts no more than 150m apart if using mild steel line wire, or 300m apart for high tensile wire • Use a straining post at every change of direction (horizontal or vertical) and at each end of the fence • Use struts that have a top diameter of at least 80mm, or are 75mm by 75mm when sawn |

Visit wrt.org.uk for more information

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| When | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the struts are 1.6m if set in concrete and 1.9m long otherwise • Notch struts into the straining post at an angle of no more than 45 degrees • Use intermediate posts that have a top diameter of at least 65mm, or are 75mm by 75mm when sawn • Make sure the intermediate posts are 1.7m long and space them no further than 3.5m apart • Make sure that all the materials you use meet the relevant British Standards - examine copies of the most up-to-date standards for guidance |
| When | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install during the seasons when the soil is dry and trafficable. |

Management for Water Quality

- Fencing helps disconnect flow from fields from watercourses and the effects of livestock activity or run-off entering the water.
- A suitable buffer gap between fencing and river will allow enough area to filter out much of the sediment carried in run-off.
- It presents an opportunity to also plant trees between the fence and water course to further enhance the stability of the banks, the filtration properties of the buffer, and improve riparian habitat.

Fencing and your farm business

Fencing along water courses can reduce the liability of your business to prosecution due to mildly polluted run-off entering a water course, through disconnecting losses.

It can also remove awkward, wet or unproductive areas of a field and allow them to be used for tree planting or other habitat creation.

Consents and Licences

It may be necessary to consult with the Environment Agency and/or Natural England when conducting works that directly affect a water course.