



How to Avoid the Three Most Common Fence Bracing Problems

Building a fence is a significant investment. If you don't get the braces installed correctly, you could be setting yourself up for disaster. Bekaert Fence Pro Keith Taylor notes braces are the backbone of your fence project, and there are three prevalent mistakes in their installation.

“Those mistakes are not getting posts deep enough, not building the brace wide enough, and welding inadequate joints on metal pipe bracing,” said Taylor.

More Ground Surface Contact Makes a Stronger Corner Post

“You can buy the best wire, but if you build a weak brace, that fence will begin to fail,” said Taylor, who has helped hundreds of livestock and rural customers install fencing projects across the country. “Without a proper brace, that fence is going to lose tension over time.”

The rule of thumb for brace installation is to have at least 40-50% of the post in the ground. The more ground contact you have, the stronger your brace is going to be.

“For a 48" to 52" high fence, we want to have three-and-a-half feet of the wood post in the ground,” said Taylor. “For pipe posts, we always recommend about a foot deeper than a wooden post.”

Tips for Preparing Post Holes

Taylor says the details matter at install.

“Lots of times, folks use an auger on their tractor to dig post holes,” said Taylor. “Your auger will stop at three feet. Then, as you pull that auger out, you're back-filling in some dirt accidentally, so now your hole is really only two-and-a-half feet deep,” he said. “It's important to take the time to really get to almost three-and-a-half feet deep for a 5" to 8" wood post and a minimum of four-and-a-feet deep for 2 7/8" pipe. Then, ensure the hole is clear of extra dirt before we place the post or pipe in the ground.”

For those with access, he said fence post drivers are a great tool. These hydraulic-powered pounders attach to the PTO-shaft or remote hydraulics at the back of your tractor. You lock your wooden or steel post inside the driver and level your post. Using a hand lever, you “pound” the post into the ground until you reach the desired depth; no digging or back-filling is involved.

Build the Right Corner Brace with the Right Width


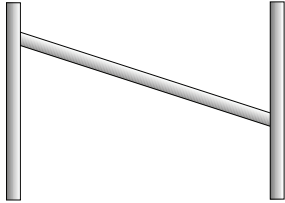
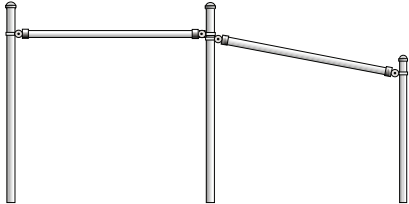
When it comes to bracing corners, there are plenty of options. “There is no universal rule that says one corner brace style is better than another,” said Taylor. “When choosing the right style corner brace you should consider several details including soil type, depth of the post, the width of your post and post material.”

Taylor admits many options can make it hard to decide which brace to use. “I recommend taking a look around the countryside and seeing what others are doing,” said Taylor. He also welcomes emails into the Fence Pros “contact us” website or calling a local Bekaert Fence distributor.

"Others have learned lessons on which brace works best in your region of the country, and you can benefit from their experiences," Taylor added.

Regardless of style, Taylor recommends your "top rail" or

"cross-member" be at least two to two-and-a-half times as long as the height of your fence. "Anything shorter, and you lose significant strength," said Taylor.

H Brace - Wood	Great for heavy-duty fence lines, especially high pressure livestock fencing.	
H Brace - Pipe	Best suited for light to medium-duty fence like temporary fence or barbed wire.	
N Brace - Wood	Not recommended for do-it-yourselfers due to difficult construction (while super strong, this brace includes 4.5 - 5 posts in a single brace).	
N Brace - Pipe	Mid-duty, moderately strong fence, OK for cattle pressure.	
HN Brace - Pipe	Super strength, great for solid gauge fence. Recommend Fence Bullet for easiest construction.	

Another factor in the brace style you choose is determined by the fence's goal and the types of materials you choose. "The higher the number of line wires in your fence material, means the need for more tension, which will require a stronger brace," noted Taylor.

If you have a temporary or low-pressure fence, such as a four-strand barbed wire, your corner brace can be designed accordingly since it will not face a lot of pressure.

If you have a high-pressure fence situation, such as many cows per acre, you will want a much stronger corner brace.

Taylor said a high-quality 10-foot wide wooden H brace with six-inch diameter posts pounded three-and-a-half feet in the ground into good soil can withstand 6,000 pounds of tension based on its solid construction.

Remove Welding from Your Pipe Fence Process

Pipe fencing is common in the western half of the U.S. and requires an in-field welder to build braces and corner posts. New Fence Bullet Brace Kits sold by Bekaert come in three styles — H, N and HN — and are available for either 2 3/8" or 2 7/8" sized pipe. Each kit comes with post bands, pipe sleeves,

nuts and bolts as well as a press-on cap for protection against the elements.

With uprights in and pipes cut, it can take as little as five minutes to connect an H style or N style brace or just 10 minutes for an HN style brace (watch installation how-to video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXAKrcUD6BI>).

"What this means for your fence project is a shortened timeline with less labor required and, ultimately, serious savings potential as it can cost more than \$20 per weld to build pipe fence braces," said Taylor.

While a welded brace is still going to be your strongest solution, the Fence Bullet does not compromise when it comes to strength and durability. Its well-crafted steel components are designed to last under a variety of conditions.

If selecting the right brace or fencing material has you scratching your head, Keith Taylor and the team of Bekaert Fence Pros are willing to assist you, regardless of the size of your project. Submit questions at <https://fencing.bekaert.com/> contact and a member of The Bekaert Fence Pro team will respond within 24 hours.