



## Repair Or Replace? What to Do About a Worn Out Fence

Deciding whether to repair an old fence or replace it can be a tough decision. Before making a decision, look for things like broken posts and rusty, brittle wire that breaks easily. If your animals are getting out, it's time to take action on your fence sooner rather than later as they can become a liability or lead to lost income.

Nothing lasts forever. A fence is no different. Vehicles or trees destroy them. Animals run through them. Time and weather rust the wire, erode the posts and ultimately, wear down fences to the point of no return. When a fence's time has come and gone, landowners have two choices: repair it or replace it.

Sometimes, a quick fix will do. Splice in some new wire, tighten it up, staple it to the posts and move on with your day. But other times, a more extensive repair or even a full replacement is necessary.

Deciding whether to fix the fence or start from scratch isn't always a clear choice. Steven Sarson, Technical Support Manager for Bekaert, lends his 30+ years of fencing expertise to help landowners determine the best option for their situation.

### Know the Signs

Before deciding, Sarson says there are a few things to look for. "You want to look for broken posts and wire that has rusted to the point that it has lost its strength and is easily broken. Obviously, if your animals are getting out, it's time to do something about it."

Aside from rust, other signs of weak wire to look for are scratched galvanization and bent or broken wire. Sagging wire and leaning posts are other signs that a fence may be in need of repair or replacement.

If there has been an accident, such as a vehicle collision with a fence or a large tree branch falling on it, it's important to assess the fence for any damages. If it's just a small part of the fence that's worse for wear, a quick repair will likely suffice.

While Sarson says he doesn't recommend reusing any material from the old fence, there are a few instances when parts of it may be reused. "If the braces are still in good condition, go ahead and reuse those," he says.

Sarson explains further that geographic location can also

affect the chances of reusing material. "In the western part of the country, there aren't extensive fences like there are in the east because stocking densities are lower. So if you just have bad posts, you can reuse the wire." Sarson says the climate variations in the east and west can also affect fence material. "Fence seems to last much longer in the west than it does in the east. In the east, there are issues with lots of humidity and acid rains that deteriorate coating very quickly. Using high tensile wire with quality class three or Bezinal® coatings adds many years to the wires' longevity in the east."

Wherever landowners are located, Sarson says that when determining whether to repair or replace a fence,

**"A lot of it comes down to economics, time and aesthetics."**

### Economics

Sarson explains further, "When it comes down to dollars and cents, installing a new fence is more expensive than repairing an old fence." However, economics is made up of more than just money. It's also about comparing alternatives and making the best choice overall. Sarson asks, "Can you afford not to replace it? If you get to the point where your animals are constantly getting out because the fence has outlived its longevity, even after repairs, it's time to bite the bullet and put up a new one."

To combat repeated repair costs, Sarson urges landowners to use good quality materials from the start. "You want to have all your parts and pieces last as long as your fence does," he says. For example, "If you use an inexpensive, painted T-post that will rust in 8 to 10 years, the lifespan of your fence gets shortened." Sarson recommends using galvanized T-posts with Bezinal® T-clips and pressure-treated wood with Bezinal® staples for a



Installing a new fence can be more expensive than repairing an old one, but it can save time in the long run. Before deciding to repair or replace a fence, first decide whether time or budget is your top priority.



Before replacing or repairing a fence, survey your land and make a plan. Determine how you want to use your land, if you want to divide it up in the future or rotate your animals. Planning before repairing can save you time down the road. Using the Bekaert Fence Calculator can help save time and money.

fence that will last for decades.

When you've made the choice to build a new fence, it's also important to consider the cost-per-foot of the replacement fence. Installing high tensile class three or Bezial wire, combined with wider post spacing, will result in a stronger, longer-lasting fence at a much lower cost-per-foot. As an added benefit, it will take less time to install.

### Time

If time is money, installing a brand new fence might be the best option. Sarson says, "In a lot of cases, it's actually easier to just replace it. You go in, tear down the old fence, put new posts in, hang new wire and move on. Repairing a fence can be really time-consuming, especially on an old fence because re-tensioning it is very difficult. Some people might find eating up all that time to be expensive as it takes them away from things like taking care of their animals, haying, planting or harvesting."

When a repair is in order, Sarson says using Gripple joiners can speed up the process. "A Gripple joiner is a two-way wire joiner," says Sarson. "You slide the Gripple joiner onto one broken wire, use an extra piece of smooth or barbed for the length of the repair, then attach that to other broken wire using another Gripple joiner. And then you can pull that through and re-tension the fence. It's really quick and simple."

### Aesthetics

Sarson adds, "Sometimes, a fence just gets ugly and it needs to be replaced because it's just worn out. If you have that beautiful country farmhouse and it looks really nice but it's surrounded by scrappy looking fence, replacing it makes a lot of sense."

### Either Way, Be Prepared

Sarson says that whether landowners decide to repair their fence or replace it, it's important to be prepared. "One of the things I really stress with people when they're rebuilding, or even repairing, is to make a plan. Take a good look at your farm and how you use the land. Decide if you're going to want to divide it up into smaller areas, or where you might want to rotate your animals for grazing." Sarson says it doesn't have



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to be drawn to scale. It's okay to just draw it out on a piece of paper. Once you have your new design, use the Bekaert Fence Calculator to establish a list of materials that you will need for your new fence. "These simple tricks and tools can save you time in the end," says Sarson.

Sarson also reminds landowners that even when repairing a fence, it's important to check local regulations. "Sometimes they made the highway wider or changed the right of way or something. So check with your county officials before you do any repairs. It's also always important to call 811." He also says that landowners should check with their local extension agents, NRCS or USDA as these organizations will occasionally have programs that will cost-share fence projects.

**To learn more about how Bekaert can help you determine the right plan of action for your fence, contact Sarson and other Bekaert Fence Pros through Bekaert's Ask The Fence Pro feature, also available on Bekaert's website: <https://fencing.bekaert.com>**