Introduction
Emergency or temporary fencing for livestock should be relatively easy to install and serve as an effective barrier for proper containment. Fencing serves as a barrier to livestock in two ways: a physical barrier (board fences, woven wire, etc.) and a psychological barrier (barbed wire and electric fences). Which type of fence to use in an emergency or temporary situation depends on the class of animal, disposition of the animals, and the reason employed. For example, if the purpose of the fence is to hold a group of animals for loading, a physical barrier such as steel corral panels will be needed. On the other hand, if a damaged section of perimeter pasture fence needs to be secured until permanent repairs can be made, a temporary fence of electrified polytape and tread-in posts should suffice.

Physical Barriers (Corral Panels and Wire Cattle Panels)
Fences that are physical barriers must be both physically sturdy to withstand pressure from livestock and also be very visible to the animal to discourage challenges to the fence. Board fences are the most commonly used physical barrier fences for holding, sorting or loading animals. Existing corrals or handling facilities should be used in emergency situations to hold livestock until pasture fences can be repaired or to facilitate loading for transport to a more secure location. If no handling facility exists, a pen can be quickly constructed from portable corral panels (See Figure 1). Corral panels come in 12-foot sections and are designed to be chained or pinned together to form a freestanding pen (See Figures 2 & 3). The pen should be constructed in an oval or circular shape and located in the corner of a pasture against an existing permanent fence for added stability. Locating the corral in the corner of a field will also ease the penning of livestock. Corral panels for cattle range in cost from $80 to $120 and usually come in two grades. They range in weight from 50 to 100 lbs (depending on the grade) and can be handled by two people. Corral panels are easily transported inside a stock trailer. Cattle corral panels are taller with wider openings between the horizontal bars while corral panels for sheep and goats are designed to be shorter with more narrow spacing between the horizontal bars.
Another option for physical barrier fencing is the use of wire cattle panels (See Figure 4). These are made of \(\frac{1}{4}\) inch steel wire and are 16 feet long and 52 inches high. These panels are flexible and can bend to fit curves or bows in the fence. Wire panels are not freestanding and must be supported with posts to be effective. In temporary applications with calm livestock, wire panels can be supported with steel T-posts. These panels are ideal for fixing small holes in fences such as wash-outs from creeks and ditches or to serve as a temporary gate. Wire panels can also be used to mend weak areas in existing corrals if properly supported. Wire panels can also be used for sheep, goats, and swine. They sell for $16 to $20 and can be handled by one person.

**Psychological Barriers (Temporary Electric Fences and Barbed Wire)**

Psychological barriers are fences that cause discomfort when the animal comes in contact with the fence. Electric fences, and to some degree barbed wire fences, both function in this manner.

Of these two types of fences, barbed wire fences are the most reliable to use for most classes of cattle. However, barbed wire may not be a suitable solution for containing horses or other skittish animals as they may scare easily and cut themselves on the barbs. Cattle do not have to be trained to the wire and even cattle with poor dispositions will honor a three strand barbed wire fence if not pressured or crowded. For temporary quick fixes, a minimum of three strands are needed. Four to five strands are needed for permanent fences. The disadvantage to barbed wire in emergency situations is that it must be taut to be effective and to make it taut requires proper brace assemblies, which are time consuming to build. Barbed wire fences also require a post spacing of 10 to 15 feet; therefore, more posts are needed than other types of fencing.

The easiest and cheapest fence to build is a temporary electric fence. The components consist of small lightweight posts, polywire or polytape, electric fence reels for rolling and unrolling the wire and a fence charger (Figures 5 & 6). In addition to the fence components, a digital voltmeter (Figure 7) or a five-light tester should be used for periodic testing of voltage on the fence. Refer to the charger manufacturer’s specifications for proper voltages.
There are a variety of temporary electric fence posts on the market. The plastic tread-in posts that have multiple wire holders or clips are probably the most useful for all species of livestock. This design will enable the construction of multiple strand fences for goats, sheep or untrained cattle. The tread-in design (Figure 8) will allow the post to be easily pushed into the ground with your foot without driving or hammering. Under dry or frozen conditions, the post can be gently driven into the ground using the side of a hammer. Plastic posts come in a variety of colors. White is the most visible color under most conditions. Temporary posts will range in cost from $1.50 to $3.00 each.

The development of polywires and polytapes has greatly improved the ease with which temporary fences can be constructed and moved. Polywire products are made of polyethylene strands intertwined with small steel strands. This makes the wire handle like heavy string when rolling or unrolling. There are different grades and colors of poly products. Choose polywire or polytape that has at least five strands of steel for best conductivity. Again, white is the most visible color in most situations. Remember, these fences work as psychological barriers - the animal must see the fence to respect it. Consider using polytape when containing horses or untrained livestock. Polytape is usually ½” in width and is much more visible than polywire. The flat design allows it to flicker in the wind further enhancing visibility. Polywire and polytape range in cost from 1.5 to 4 cents per foot.

Post spacing will vary with the terrain, application and product used. On even terrain with trained livestock, posts for polywire fences can be spaced as far as 40 feet apart. If using polytape for untrained animals a spacing of 15 to 20 feet may be needed. Since polytape is a heavier material than polywire, post spacing will need to be reduced.

Polywire products should be stored and used with reels designed for electric fencing applications. These reels can be purchased where polywire is sold and are made of UV resistant plastic. They also feature a metal hook for hanging the reel on an existing fence (Figure 9). The hook is independent from the wire on the spool and can be hung on a non-electric fence without grounding out the electric fence. If hanging the reel on a permanent electric fence, the polywire can be wrapped around the hook using the permanent fence as the source of electricity for the temporary polywire fence. Electric fence reels range in cost from $25 to $40.

The most important components of electric fencing are the fence charger and the grounding system. There are two types of chargers: 110v AC plug-in chargers or solar/battery chargers. Generally, solar/battery chargers are twice the cost of comparable sized 110v chargers. However, solar/battery chargers allow the use of electric fencing in remote locations where electric service is not available (Figure 10). Some solar chargers come with a specialized dry cell battery while others use a wet cell battery that must be purchased separately. If using a wet cell battery, choose a deep cycle marine battery for best results. Also be sure to buy a low-impedance charger when using polywire products. Some of the older style “weed-burner” chargers will melt polywire.
The best charger in the world cannot overcome a poor grounding system. The grounding system is vital for completing the circuit of electricity back to the charger. When an animal touches the fence, current runs from the animal into the ground and back through the ground system to the charger. This circuit must be completed in order for the animal to feel a shock. Think of the grounding system as a radio or TV antennae system - the better the reception, the better the shock. In permanent installations, 3 ground rods, 6-8 feet long, should be driven into the ground and connected by one continuous wire. For short runs of temporary fence, one portable ground rod in moist soil may be adequate. After installing or moving any electric fence, use a tester to check the performance of the fence. A volt meter is invaluable for checking the strength and status of electric fences and grounding systems.

The two most common reasons electric fences fail are poor grounding and untrained animals. Animals can be trained very quickly to electric fences. Use polytape inside of a small secure lot to allow animals to become familiar with the fence. Avoid turning out untrained animals into a large field that is divided by one strand of polywire. They may run through the wire before they see it. Use old fence rows or wood lines to provide a backdrop for the temporary fence or have several people stand behind and along the fence until the animals have calmed down from being turned out.