SUSPENSION FENCING

By Alan Ranson, Cattle Husbandry Adviser

Wire fences for cattle projects can be cheaper if the suspension method is used. Suspension fencing can be used on flat or fairly flat ground.

What is suspension fencing?

As the name suggests the fence is semi-suspended or "hung up" between strainer posts. High-tensile steel barbed wire is used. This makes the fence very springy, and when a beast touches the fence the whole fence starts to move. This tends to stop the beast from going near the fence again.

What is the difference between ordinary and suspension fencing?

Ordinary barbed wire fences need a post every 5 metres. Suspension fences require a post every 28.5 metres, with a strainer post assembly every 200 metres.

The suspension fence has wire spreaders every 5 metres to hold the horizontal wires the correct distance apart. These spreaders do not touch the ground.

The spreaders can be made by twisting two pieces of 4.0 mm (No. 8) plain wire and cutting it into lengths (see *Figure* 1).

How much money is saved?

The following are the costs per kilometre for the two types of fencing. These costs are for fences using star pickets. If the owner uses wooden posts cut from his own trees there is a considerable saving in labour when suspension fencing is used. The saving in cutting, carting and digging is estimated at 160 man hours.

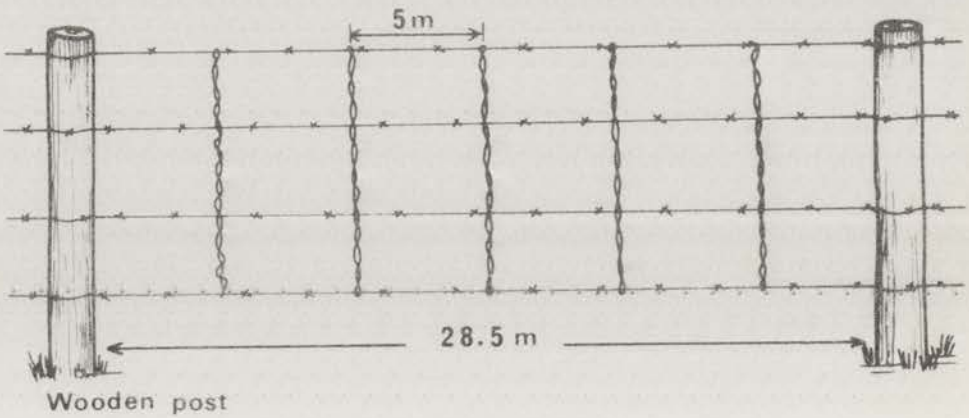

Figure 1.—Wire spreaders (not to scale).

	K411.00
2. Using high-tensile wire	
10 rolls 1.60 mm (16 gauge) high-tensile wire	K143.80
200 star pickets @ K1.20	K240.00
3 strainer posts wooden @ K2.00	K 6.00
	K389.80

Suspension method

10 rolls 1.60 mm (16 gauge) high-tensile wire	K143.80
30 star pickets @ K1.20	K 36.00
5 strainer posts wooden @K2.00	K 10.00
175 spreaders @ 10 t	K 17.50
	K207.30
Saving of	K182.50

Strainer assemblies should be constructed as in *Figure* 2.

Wire spacings should be approximately 30 cm (or 12 inches).

Special care must be taken when straining. All wires must be strained very tight with the same amount of tension on each wire.

On hilly or very steep or broken ground the fencing pattern may have to be changed. Posts should be placed on the tops of rises and bottom of depressions (see *Figure* 3). In such places it may be necessary to change to conventional fencing.

High-tensile wire will not withstand fires so remove dried grass from the fence line at times when fires are likely to occur.

Maintenance

Suspension fences are only satisfactory when they are kept properly strained. They should only be used by farmers who are capable of maintaining them properly.

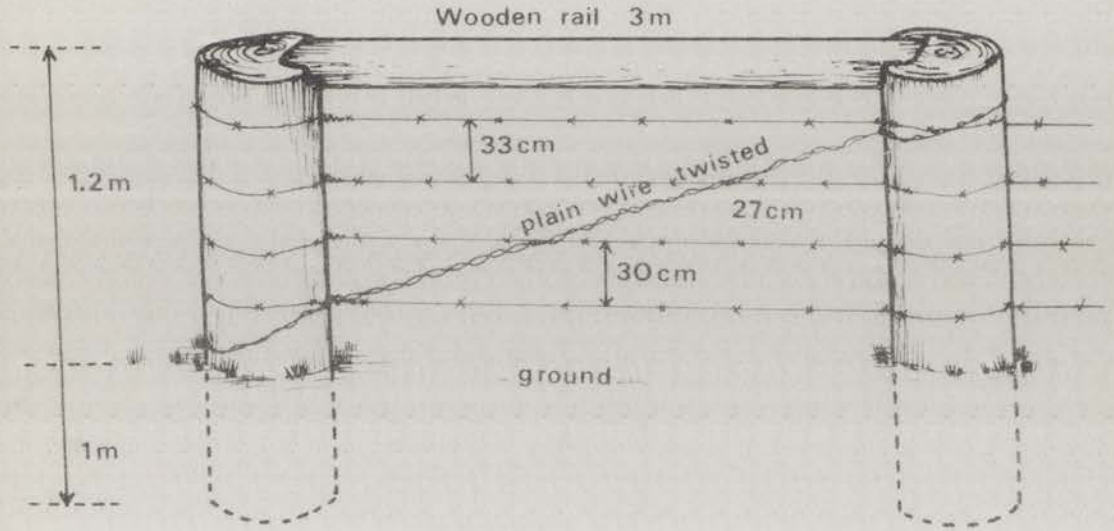

Figure 2.—Strainer assembly.

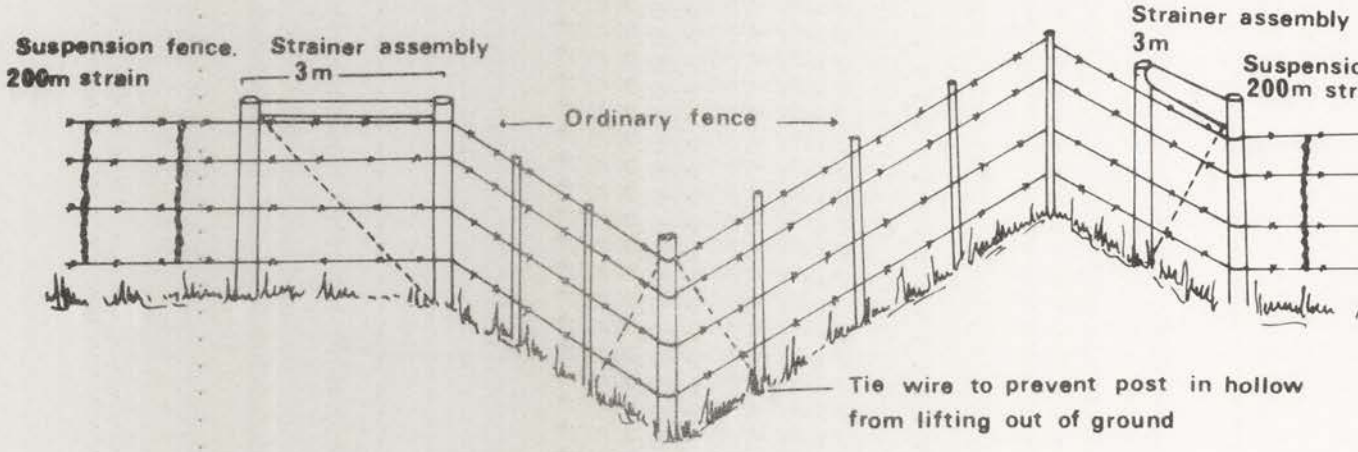

Figure 3.—Combination of suspension and ordinary fencing on hilly ground (not to scale).