

Plastic Fencing: A Light Way To Fix a Problem

Your fencing needs may be answered in one word: plastics. Screening and grids made of polymer, or plastic, have several advantages over wire or wooden fences.

The material won't rust, rot, or corrode and isn't affected by common farm chemicals. The fencing also is comparatively easy to install and maintain.

Plastic screening is especially suited for poultry houses. Not only does it keep out disease-carrying sparrows and starlings, but because it's all-plastic, it doesn't collect as much dust. Dust can interfere with ventilation.

And the plastic material has no sharp wires that can tear poultry house curtains or damage birds.

Plastic fencing is not as likely to cut horses and livestock when used for corrals, sick pens, calf hutches, or paddocks.

The plastic material can be used as a windbreak for crops and livestock, cutting wind velocities by up to 50%. As a sunshade, the screening reduces heat by up to 15 degrees.

Finally, plastic ground-reinforcing grids prevent farm roads and gateways from becoming impassable.

Four companies that supply plastic fencing products are Tensar Polytechnologies, Inc., Tenax Corp., Conwed Plastics, and Applied Extrusion Technologies, Inc.

Some companies, such as Tensar, use a process that stretches the polymer in one or two directions, increasing its strength. Other companies' products, such as those by AET, are only stretched one way and aren't as strong. Their products generally are cheaper.

Some plastic fencing companies don't stretch the plastic at all. This makes the product much weaker.

To avoid this weaker product, ask about the process used to make the screening. If the term "extrude" is used but no mention is made of an



Horses and livestock are less likely to be injured by plastic fencing because it doesn't have the sharp edges that some other types of fencing have.

additional stretching or "orienting" process, the product is probably the less durable plastic.

Life expectancies for the fencing vary among companies and should be considered guesswork because most of the products have been around for less than a decade.

However, Tensar carries a 10-year warranty on almost all of its black products. Black tends to hold up better against ultraviolet light than other colors, although most companies also offer products in orange, green, and white.

The warranty by AET depends on the amount of ultraviolet inhibitor added. Standard AET products typically have a three-year life.

But with a higher percentage of ultraviolet light inhibitors, product life can be increased by up to 10 years. The more inhibitor, the greater the cost.

Prices depend on the type and amount of fencing needed. As a comparison, fencing for horses by Tensar

costs about \$200 to \$225 a roll, while a similar product by AET costs around \$175 to \$180.

The plastic fencing companies claim that plastic can be cheaper than wire or wooden fencing.

"Labor costs are much less because one person can put it up," says Gary Delmatto, AET product manager. "And depending on what type of gauge wire you'll be replacing, the costs of materials can be less as well."

For more information, contact the following companies:

Tensar Polytechnologies Corp., 1210 Citizens Pkwy., Morrow, GA 30260, phone 1-800-845-4453; Tenax Corp., Agri Division, 8291 Patuxent Range Rd., Jessup, MD 20794, phone 1-800-356-8495; Conwed Plastics, 2640 Patton Rd., Roseville, MN 55113, phone 1-800-422-9123; or Applied Extrusion Technologies, Inc., Box 582, Middletown Industrial Park Dr., Middletown, DE 19709, phone 1-800-521-6713. ■