



FACT SHEET: Mink Ranch Fencing

To reduce the risk of disease introduction and spread, ranch access has to be restricted. Constructed barriers are needed to control human access and animal entry or escape from your ranch. Guard fences have been used for years around mink sheds on ranches and are effective when properly constructed and maintained. Guard fence recommendations for mink ranches were made by the Aleutian Disease Task Force in Nova Scotia several years ago. Today, those recommendations are equally important regardless of the size of your ranch, the disease status of your farm or the proximity to other ranches.

- Guard fencing is the first step in a proper mink ranch biosecurity program
- The area inside the mink ranch guard fence is considered a restricted area where entry and exit are strictly controlled
- All mink ranches should have a perimeter guard fence around the mink shed area of the ranch where mink are housed
- Enclosed sheds meet the need, but keeping wild mink and other disease carriers from close proximity to ranched mink requires a perimeter guard fence
- Guard fences should be well built, neat and add value to the ranch
- Guard fences in close proximity to residences have the option of being constructed with higher quality materials to help maintain residence appearance

Fence Location and Layout

- Determine the shed area to be enclosed and where the guard fence is to be positioned; determine the perimeter length for fencing material calculations
- Guard fence distance from sheds should allow for freedom of movement for equipment: feed, manure, tractors, wagons, etc.
- Workshops, storage, enclosed sheds, etc. can be incorporated into part of the guard fence to keep costs down, but entry to ranch is through one gate
- On ranches that purchase prepared feed from an off-site feed kitchen, the feed delivery area must be located outside the guard fence
- On ranches that make their own mink feed, the kitchen and feed ingredient receiving areas should be outside the perimeter of the guard fence; this keeps the kitchen isolated and helps control traffic in the feed preparation area
- Guard fencing around the mink feed kitchen ensures that delivery trucks never have an opportunity to enter the mink shed area of the ranch or cross-contaminate the area where feed carts travel
- Ranch personnel may enter the ranch through a separate entry door into a biosecure room or area in the storage shed, workshop or separate building built for this purpose

Fence Construction

- Fence height above ground, should be a minimum of 6 ft
- Fence height in ground, should be a minimum 1.5-2.0 ft to prevent digging under
- Fence posts, cross pieces and bracing should be metal or preserved wood
- Posts should be buried deep enough (4ft) to help fence resist frost heaving and wind pressures
- Fencing material should be of solid material using cladding of galvanized metal, pvc, wood fiber cement, cement board, etc.
- When fences are buried, filling the trench with ½ -1 inch crushed stone will discourage grass and weed growth and digging by pests
- Drainage ditches and waterways require a culvert under the fence and screening (1 inch mesh) on both ends
- There should be two gates, preferably at opposite ends of the ranch – one at the main entry and one for waste removal
- Gates should be of solid material and fit tightly to posts and ground when closed
- Guard fence gates should be lockable
- Post “No Entry” and “Biosecurity” signs at guard fence gates and entry door



Making the Fence Effective

- Guard fence gates should be kept closed at all times
- Monitor fence condition and make repairs as needed to maintain fence and gate integrity
- Fences constructed of galvanized wire are not effective at preventing rodents from entering the premises, or raccoons from climbing over
- Solid fences act as a windbreak, beneficial in colder times of the year and inclement weather
- Solid fences also give the mink privacy from human interference
- Guard fences must be kept clear of garbage or equipment which could allow animals to climb over the fence
- Snow removal is important; prevent snow from piling against either side of the fence, which could act as a bridge for animals crossing over
- The biosecure entry room should be a location for workers to change into ranch clothes prior to entering the ranch
- The door to the biosecure room is to be kept locked at all times
- Live traps placed by sheds and along the inside perimeter fence are recommended for capturing any escaped mink
- Escaped mink trapped within the perimeter fence should not be placed back in the breeder shed, but pelted out or placed separately in a shed designated for these captured ranch mink
- Live traps are readily available through most hardware or farm supply outlets



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