Virtual Fencing Discussion with Audience

RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Greater San Diego County

Q: Is the fencing impacted by cell reception?

A: Yes - works great at Flying F with the base station

Q: Do you ever go into the pasture to move the fence?

A: No, it can even be done from the couch, just on the phone

Q: Are there negative consequences of not moving physical fence, because you aren't seeing your herd/land as often?

A: Not for us, we still spend a lot of time walking the land to check on the herd. In some ways it helps, for example we can precisely locate a pregnant heifer to check on her more frequently, whereas they are elusive and hard to find without the tracker.

Q: Is there hesitation from the animals when you open a new area?

A: Yes, they are hesitant at first, but they adapt. They test the boundary lines with their heads.

Q: Cost?

A: We think it's cost effective when compared with labor, installation, materials, and maintenance of physical fence. Total cost was about $12,000; $6,000 for one base station, it's an additional $5,000 if you need more base stations, $30/collar plus a monthly subscription fee

Q: Do you still need fencing?

A: Yes, it is important to still have boundary fencing, but it means just opening one gate every day instead of each pasture gate, etc.

Q: Do you need a collar on every animal?

A: Yes, we have one on each animal except the bulls. They make a separate larger collar for them, but we haven't used it. We do put them on calves but must be sensitive to doing so in front of the protective moms.

Q: Can you make endless fencing/pastures/ configurations with the service?

A: There is a limit of about 30 polygons you can place, but that's enough for us, and fence lines must be at about 70-degree angles or greater.

Q: Comfort of the cow?

A: You need to closely monitor after first putting the collars on, to make sure its the right tightness. We had one injury from a tight collar, but she healed after a few days. We adjust the collar tightness in the Spring as they put on weight.

Q: Is there an emergency shut off in case of wildfire, etc?

A: We can turn all the fences/collars off with a button on the phone, but it can take up to 30 minutes to fully turn off. The cattle would very likely push through the fence lines in case of an emergency.