

Electric fence for chickens?

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We recently purchased a real farm – 1712 farmhouse, 1800's barn + stable, several outbuildings, and are planning to restore it and move into it in time :-). The main motivation was our horse, who is boarded elsewhere; we've been busy restoring the stables, fencing the paddocks and putting in electric fence (which is a must for horses).

Among the buildings on the farm is an old chicken coop – it needs a lot of work plus a fenced in area for the chickens/ducks, which we will be doing. According to our soon-to-be-neighbors, there are foxes, raccoons and hawks, so we will have to put in more secure fencing than the simple garden fencing we currently have at home (a more urban area).

The electric horse fencing package states that it protects not only livestock, but also against predators, which got us thinking. Would it be feasible to put in electric fencing for the chickens/ducks? Overhead would probably be just some wire cover against the hawks, but on the sides I want to prevent foxes, racoons, maybe even dogs from thinking this is a free chicken dinner.

The fence charger for the horses is a low impedance 2-joule 7000V system – it cycles on and off so if the horse (or something else) touches it, they get a very quick shock. I think it goes on once a second for a fraction of a second, every second. The fence uses polytape, a vinyl tape with steel filaments embedded, which delivers the shock:

<http://www.safefence.com/index.html>

Does this sound like something that would work? We would have to get a second system anyway (since the chickens/ducks will be foraging away from the horses). Do chickens and ducks respect electric fence like horses? Are they smart enough to get a shock and stay away from it, or are they likely to peck/bite/clamp their beaks onto it and shock themselves to death? And more importantly, will foxes, raccoons, etc. respect the fence?

We are more interested in keeping the predators out than keeping the chickens in (which is an easier problem). We were thinking of surrounding both the building and the yard with electric, otherwise something could try to dig/chew/maneuver their way into the coop while avoiding the electrified yard. Obviously we are going to do everything to critter-proof the coops,

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but since they are pre-existent with dirt floors, there isn't going to be an easy way to create an impervious floor as we have at home (where we built the coops from scratch with lumber floors). I suppose we could build a wood floor and attach it somehow, but that might be a difficult thing and might rot since we cannot raise the buildings for air circulation.

A big concern is the ducks – they have a pool, and love to throw around water – water and electricity don't usually mix too nicely. I want to make sure that this is safe for chickens, ducks, and us :-)

If this is feasible, how low/high should the fence be – how big a vertical area needs to be electrified so something does dig under it or jump over it?

Any thoughts are most appreciated! Thank you!!

– Andrea

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