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Training dairy bull calves to stay within light-built electric  
fences (Research Note)

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### Abstract

Training cattle to avoid electric fences before turnout to grazing reduces the risk of the animals breaking out from their paddock. We investigated the time needed for dairy bull calves to learn to avoid a light-built electric fence. Nineteen dairy bull calves were trained to an electric fence in a training yard during seven days. The number of electric shocks the animals received from the training fence was recorded continuously. After the training period, the calves were turned to pasture. Nine of the animals were also grazed the following summer as yearlings, and observed before turnout in a smaller enclosure. The calves got more shocks from the fence during training hour 1 than during any of the following seven hours. The number of shocks the calves received from the fence also declined from training day 1 to 2 and from training day 3 to 4. The results indicate that the dairy bull calves learned to avoid an electric fence quickly, even within an hour from release into the training yard. A simple training procedure was sufficient to ensure that the animals could be grazed in and would avoid a light-built electric fencing system as calves and, even after a winter-housing period, as bulls.

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