Use As Temporary "Breaks"

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WITH the supply of efficient farm labour steadily diminishing, the farmer must investigate all labour-saving devices. One of these devices which has come into favour is the electric fence.

In Southland electric fences are most in favour for erecting "breaks" for stock while feeding on turnips, swedes, or chou moellier. Stock are on the "break" only for a few hours daily. In cases such as these they have been found most reliable, particularly with cattle.

However, in many herds there will be found at least one cow which is prepared to take the shock and prove troublesome, and it may be necessary to dispose of this animal before satisfactory results are obtained. With cattle, only one wire is required, and it is therefore not advisable to run weaner calves with the herd, for these calves are able to walk underneath the wire and, once through, encourage the bigger beasts to follow.

In the case of sheep two wires are recommended, but results generally have not been so successful as with dairy herds. This is often due to lack of perseverance in the training of the animals. In the first place, a large number of sheep should be confined on a small "break."

Control of Ewes

At the Winton Demonstration Farm a mob of 500 ewes was confined on half an acre of swedes, and only one got through the fence. Wool insulates the shock, and to feel the shock the sheep had to take it on the extremities, either the legs or head. After about three shocks for each animal no further attempts were made to touch the fence, and after the third day the current was turned off.

A curious instance of the intelligence of the manager's dog also came under notice. Last winter the dog received a shock, and this year an ordinary wire-netting "break" on resistant turnips has been erected in the same field, but the dog will not go near this fence, and will go round instead of over it when called.

There is a big diversity of opinion as to the best wire to use in the fence. Barbed wire is recommended by most manufacturers, and may probably be the best for sheep. Where "breaks" have to be shifted, however, the farmer objects to the frequent handling of barbed wire. With cattle, many farmers use the ordinary No. 8 gauge fencing wire, while many use finer wire down to No. 14 gauge.

There is no doubt that, with the prevailing scarcity of wire, both plain and barbed, and the rising costs of wire and posts, farmers will make more and more use of these machines for temporary fencing.