

Foundations of Virtual Fence: Training and Animal Welfare

Learning Process

With virtual fence (VF), animals learn to pair the beeping sound with the upcoming electrical cue and the invisible barrier during several days of training.

- After training, animals should respond to the sound alone by turning away
- The desired behavior is reinforced when the cue stops



Best Practices

- ★ Begin training in areas with **physical fences** to prevent animals from escaping during early learning
- ★ **Consistency and repetition** are essential for strong behavioral responses
- ★ Keep VF lines simple and avoid sharp angles to reduce confusion and prevent stress

Predictability and controllability of cues are essential to avoid stress

Poorly designed VF systems may lead to **chronic stress** or learned helplessness, especially if animals can't figure out how to avoid cues

Animal Welfare

Electrical cues may cause acute, short-term stress. Chronic stress is a more serious welfare concern, potentially affecting health, growth, and reproduction.

For more information, read *Training and Animal Welfare*

Access VF resources at rangelandsgateway.org/vf

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