

Virtual Fencing

Fire Beacon Hill Summer 2020

The Devon Red cattle on this site are a traditional way for us to manage the reserve, breeds like this would have grazed on Fire Beacon Hill since the 15th century, and they continue to enhance the landscape and wildlife on the reserve. To ensure the safety of our livestock we have always used fences to direct their grazing and prevent them running out onto the busy A3052.

We are now trialling a new 'virtual fencing system'. Our desired boundaries are drawn online, linked to GPS collars worn by the animals. When an animal gets close to the boundary, the collar gives an audible warning, followed by a mild electric shock if the animal continues to walk through the boundary. These systems prevent unnecessary shocks to dogs, deer, or children, but dogs must be kept under control to prevent spooking the cattle.

Physical fences will remain for a period while we train the animals to the new collars, and some may remain on a more permanent basis where necessary, but eventually we hope to remove much of the electric fencing across the reserve. If you see cattle in areas without fencing, this is not a cause for concern, they are moved around the reserve periodically and this system allows us to graze new areas. Our virtual fences are updated online and if any issues arise with the collars or GPS system, we are notified immediately by text.

This system has been very successful in Norway, with a similar programme working effectively for European bison in Romania, and we hope to replicate their successes here. This system will increase the potential safe grazing area on the reserve, giving us more flexibility and improving the safety of our animals.

If you do have any concerns or questions, you can contact the RSPB Aylesbeare team on 01395 233655. More information on the virtual fencing system can be found on the 'Nofence' website.



FREE ROAMING CATTLE

If you see cattle in areas without fencing, this is not a cause for concern! The cattle at Fire Beacon Hill are currently trialling a virtual fencing system.

In place of physical fencing, our boundaries are being created with an online software, linked to GPS collars worn by the cattle. When an animal gets close to a boundary, the collar gives it an audible warning, followed by a mild electric shock if the animal continues to walk toward the boundary. These systems prevent unnecessary shocks to dogs, deer, or children, but dogs must be kept under control to prevent spooking the cattle. Our virtual fences are regularly checked and updated online and if any issues arise with the collars or GPS system, we are notified immediately by text.

If you have any concerns or would like to find out more, visit the Nofence website or call the RSPB office on 01395 233655.