

Fence Posts - Example costings

Most farms need fencing. Current supplies are softwood and often don't last longer than 10 years. Chestnut (and other species) is a proven material usually lasting 10-15 years, but is more expensive when bought in. Though not suitable for every farm chestnut grows well in many parts of the UK and is well suited to coppicing for a continuous supply of posts.

Sweet chestnut coppice is cut in rotation often around 10-15 years for fence posts and up to 20yrs for cleaving fencing material. Each stool typically yields 3-6 poles which might be up to 350mm in diameter at the base and 12 m in height for longer rotations.

If you planted 300 trees harvested on a 15 year rotation

Harvested trees / year	Poles / stool	Poles / year	Stakes / pole	Stake value	Total Value
20	4	80	3	£30.00	£7,200.00

This is an oversimplification since some stakes would be shorted and narrower giving more but smaller material but gives an idea of potential value.

Guide to the diameter of felled coppice for further processing:

Use	Diameter mm
Lathes	25-40
Tree stakes	40-50
Fencing Stakes	50-75
Straining posts	100-125
Post and Rails for cleaving	150-200

Eastbrook Farm Fencing Real Life Example							
Item	Length	Diameter	Treated	Price/each	Estimated Chestnut price	No. req. for 4090m fencing	Total Cost
Stakes	2.7	75-100	Creo	£7.23	£7.50	1023	£7,396.29
Strutt	2.4	75-100	Creo	£4.89	£6.18	103	£503.67
Strainer	3	125-150	Creo	£21.52	£30.00	85	£1,829.20
Turning Post	3	150-175	Creo	£30.06	£35.00	41	£1,232.46
							£10,961.62

Summary

Growing your own fence posts is relatively easy, though the costings here are for chestnut there are plenty of alternative species (oak, cedar, black locust) if your farm will not grow chestnut. The labour requirement is over winter so can help to even seasonal employment needs on farm and fit around other harvested crops. Machinery requirements are potentially minimal (chainsaw).

Suggested resource –

- @Copseworker on twitter
- http://acoateswps.co.uk/A_Coates_Woodland_Products_and_Services/Chestnut_poles.html