

The Electric Fence Beverage

By Leonard Hyde

After reading RC Watt's recent Forum, I started to dash off this information to him in a letter, but then realized that many others in the club could benefit from my experience. Don't get me wrong - I am far from being an expert on Beverage antennas - in fact, this year was the first time I had used one. Yet, I have had such a happy experience using a somewhat unorthodox approach, I feel I should share it.

My approach to the Beverage was dictated by a number of factors. At Ballard, I had to get the antenna in before the next morning because it was stretched across a neighbor's hay field, including his access road. Up in the woods, where I now go "Beveraging," I cannot have a permanent installation for obvious reasons.

I had an old roll of electric fence wire, about 800' feet long. One evening, I decided to try just laying it out on the ground to the southwest. I grounded it at the far end with a long screwdriver, pushed down into the moist soil. A real professional installation, right?

I was absolutely astounded at the antenna's performance. My radio dial was covered with stations from Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and later that night, Mexico. On another evening, with the antenna more to the south, Cuba was dominant, and I logged South American stations for the first time.

I have had similar good DXing up in the woods with the antenna to the SSE, and the NNE. I recently bought a new roll of wire, so as to have the full 1725' length. I have only tried it once to date, and ex were very mediocre that night. Yet, I logged several 250 watt daytime only stations in Northern Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and later that night, the band was full of TA hets.

Therefore, don't let the lack of a place for a permanent Beverage installation, or your age, or time constraints, cheat you out of Beverage DXing. Using my modified approach, anyone can probably try it. You haven't LIVED until you've DXed on a Beverage - I can say that with gusto!

First of all, you need the wire. The wire I use is sold locally at a True Value hardware for \$10.39 for a 1/4 mile roll. It is marked as .042 gauge electric fence wire (STRONGER than 17 gauge, it claims.) The wire comes on a plastic spool, with a metal payout bail.

You are going to need another spool, about twice the size of the original, because there is no way you are going to get all that wire back on the original spool. I was fortunate to find an old metal spool that once held half a mile of fence wire. When wound up, my 1/4 mile fills it nicely.

Adapt the windup spool as shown in the diagram. It will make winding up the wire much easier.

You will need a place to lay out the wire. A campsite is good, provided you have enough space in the desired direction. The wire can be laid out through the trees - it will be slightly harder to reel in. A field or pasture is great. If you take the wire up as soon as you are finished, even the notorious "Beverage Eaters" will probably not bother it. Of course, if you have ample time both to lay out and pick up the wire, or do not have to take it up for a while, it may be affixed to trees or fence posts using inexpensive plastic electric fence insulators every 75 feet or so. Just replace the nails provided with bugle head screws, and you can easily install and remove the insulators from whatever you have them installed on. (This wire will stretch considerably if left hanging for very long without supports every 10 feet or so - a 100 foot run that I had up in the air was dragging the ground in the middle after a month.)

Be aware that raising the wire up off the ground will make it susceptible to lightning. Take the appropriate precautions.

Use standard Beverage coupling techniques to hook up to the radio. I simply bring the "hot" end right to the radio, eliminating the need for a lead-in. This wire DOES NOT solder, so any connections you make will have to be by alligator clips or screw terminals.

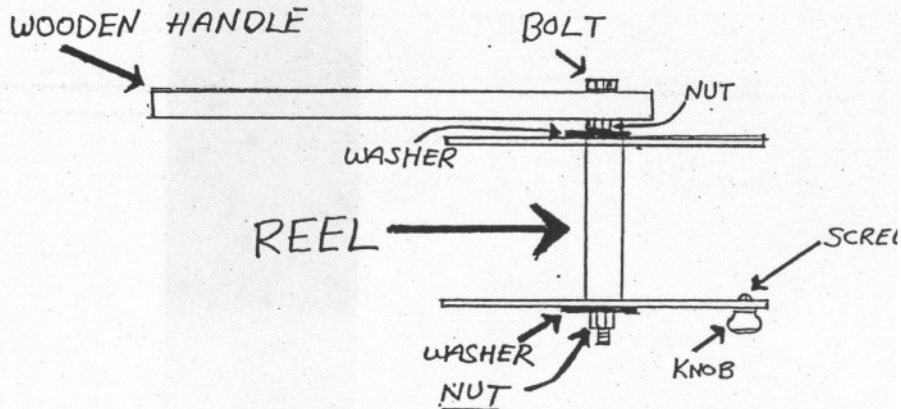
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When taking up the wire, NEVER reel it in while walking along it's length. Before you have gone 200 feet, you will have a hopeless tangle. The wire is quite stiff, and tends to spiral as you reel it. Therefore, stand in one place, and reel the wire in like a fishing line. This way, the kinks will work themselves out as you reel. (Don't forget to unhook it at the terminated end first, hi.)

For the first several hundred feet, you probably will not be strong enough to reel the wire in this way. (I'm not!) I simply walk backward about 10 to 15' feet, holding the reel tightly so as to pull the wire, and then reel in the slack that was just pulled up. After a while, the wire will have less resistance to pulling, and you can reel it in normally.

This technique especially lends itself to camping trips and beach expeditions. Of course, a copper wire Beverage installed 20' above ground in the clear, and properly terminated with a good electrical ground will work better. Yet, this system will FAR outperform any loop antenna. It can make Beverage DXing possible for nearly anyone, with a minimum of outlay and effort. I urge anyone who has not experienced Beverage DXing yet to try it.

I would greatly enjoy hearing any and all experiences using this method. Feel free to write me at the above address, or report them to DXM in the DXR or Forum columns. I hope you have as much success and happiness with it as I have. 73, and GREAT DXing de LLH!



(LEAVE LOOSE ENOUGH FOR
REEL TO ROTATE)

"SIMPLE TAKE UP REEL FOR FENCE WIRE