

COMPARISON OF HAND PACKED & MACHINE MADE PANEL FENCES

The main differences between hand packed and machine compressed brush fence installations:

1. Compression - The 'ausbrush', machine made panels are made under machine compression in a controlled factory environment and have wire staple spacings of approx 100mm, whereas in a hand packed fence the brush is packed in the street under all weather conditions and staple spacings depend on the packer used and are generally around 300mm apart and more and the brush is packed as loosely or tightly as the packer determines.

2. Settlement between layers - The hand packed fence is packed in two layers, with its top layer of brush suspended about 300mm or so above ground and the integrity of the fence relying on friction between the top and the bottom layers of brush and spacing and tension in the wire staples for the top layer of brush to remain suspended. As the density of the brush decreases with age, the tension in the staples becomes less and the top layer of brush can and does settle into the bottom layer leaving a characteristic gap at the top of fencing as seen throughout Adelaide. Machine made panels are guaranteed not to sag or settle due to the nature of the brush layup, with stick as well as fine leaf material throughout the height of the panel and with closely spaced wire staples at 100mm spacings fitted under machine compression. Hand packed fences are destined to sag because of the nature of their brush layup, staple spacings and compression levels

3. Green leaf material - The hand packed fence has green leaf material at top and bottom of fence and all the woody material and stick ends of the two layers overlapping in the middle of the fence. The green leaf material deteriorates and rots out first, leading to shrinkage at top and bottom of the fence and a further reason for the sagging effect seen in hand packed brush fences all around Adelaide - eg lose 25mm of brush leaf at the top and 25mm at the bottom of fence in a hand packed fence and an overall sag of 50mm will result at the top of the fence as the wiring cannot support the weight of the brush and the whole brush column comes down with characteristic drooping of the wires.

The machine compressed panel has woody stick material throughout its full height, tightly woven, intermingled and compressed with fine leaf material and stapled at close spacings and they just do not sag.

4. Running wires - A further reason that machine made panel fences are more durable than hand packed fences, is that the panel wires are tensioned around the posts at each end of each panel, whereas in a hand packed fence the wires return around every fourth post or more. As the hand packed fence ages and leaf material rots out of the bottom of the fence, the wires cannot support the

weight of the brushwork and drooping of the wires results and sagging of the brush occurs over the 4 panel span. In comparison the 8 pairs of wires in a machine made panel are tensioned off around the post at each end of each panel. These support the panel and locate the panel better on its base laterally, whereas the hand packed fences with wiring returning every fourth post, the wires have more slackness in them and the brushwork can become dislodged off its base at the centre causing immediate sagging of the fence.....

Machine made panels are also faster to install and there is less mess/offcuts to clean up and are now used exclusively throughout Australia with hand packing a dying method. In WA machine made panels are all that is used and most fence installations in VIC and NSW are now made with machine made brush panel product and our business here in Adelaide is growing exponentially as locals discover the benefits.

Hand packers are heard to say - "but you can't repair a machine made panel fence" -

However, machine compressed panels do not sag and do not need to be repaired unless vehicle impacted or storm damaged etc and then individual panels can quite easily be replaced, more easily and cheaply than hand repairing.

Panels can be easily and quickly replaced by removing the post rolls cutting the wires where they tie off around the post and fitting a new panel, replacing post rolls and capping or roll top. **Ask a hand packer whether he will guarantee his work from sagging and I will be interested to hear his answer, because sagging is inherent in the nature of the brush layup in a hand packed fence.**

Regards
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ausbrush

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