

# How to recognize quality treated posts and poles

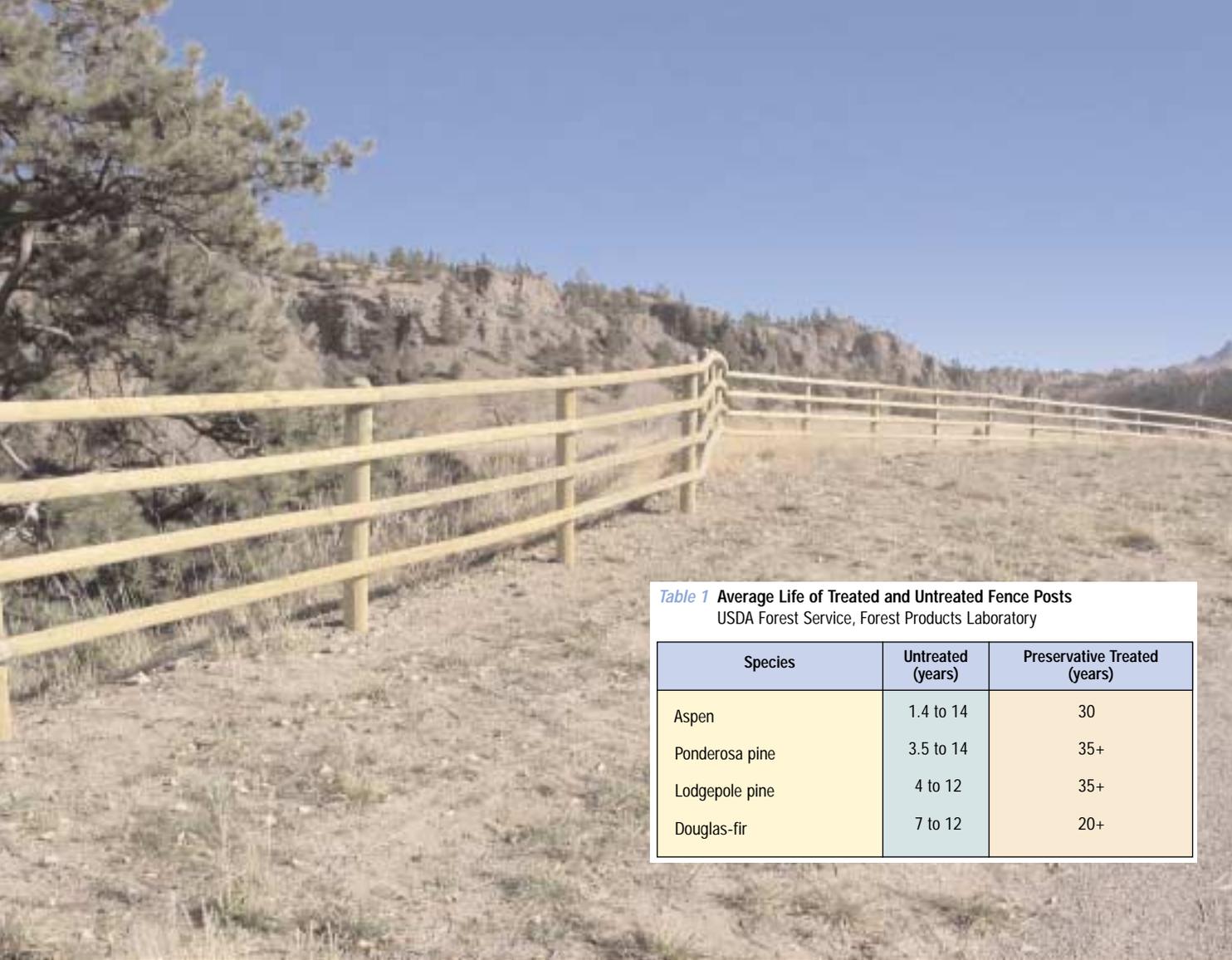


## Pressure-treated wood fence posts

Long life. Natural beauty. Real value.



Demand Quality Wood Posts



**Table 1** Average Life of Treated and Untreated Fence Posts  
USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory

Species	Untreated (years)	Preservative Treated (years)
Aspen	1.4 to 14	30
Ponderosa pine	3.5 to 14	35+
Lodgepole pine	4 to 12	35+
Douglas-fir	7 to 12	20+

## Pressure-treated wood posts deliver real value

Properly treated roundwood posts and poles are the preferred choice of the agricultural industry for fencing and other ranch and farm projects. These materials are also popular for ranchette perimeter fencing and are frequently specified by highway and park departments.

Pressure treatment is the process where chemical preservatives are forced into wood cells in an

enclosed cylinder or retort, to provide protection against decay, fungi and insects. The life span of a typical wood post **can increase up to tenfold** when treated properly with a preservative (Table 1).

Treated posts and poles are strong, good looking, easy to install, maintenance free and last a long time. Properly treated wood is safe when used in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and industry-approved guidelines.

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR

## Characteristics of high-quality, properly treated roundwood posts

### Does the product meet U.S. specifications for treated posts?

The American Wood Preservers' Association (AWPA) specifications are the principal wood-treating standards used throughout the United States. Properly treated wood posts must meet the AWPA C5 standard (Table 2). There are many good preservatives available for a variety of products and applications. Regardless of the preservative used, make certain your supplier provides you only with roundwood posts that meet this AWPA C5 standard.

### Do the posts look good?

Wood posts can offer an aesthetically pleasing finished product. High-quality, properly treated roundwood posts and poles should be clean, free of bark, smooth, and straight.

### Is the product sound?

Properly treated roundwood posts and poles should be free of excessive cracking, splits, knots, and rot, and have a minimal amount of taper. Visually inspect each delivery to ensure soundness of materials.

### Are they consistently sized?

Properly treated posts and poles are sized correctly. If you are purchasing four-inch diameter posts, all of the posts should measure four inches or larger on the small end. Make certain you are receiving the quality product you purchased.

**Table 2 AWPA C5 Standard – Recommended pressure-treatment retentions and depth of penetration for wood posts in ground contact**  
American Wood Preservers' Association 2002 Standards

Preservative	Retention (lb/ft <sup>3</sup> )	Depth of Penetration*
<i>Lodgepole pine</i>		
Copper Naphthenate	0.055	1 1/4 inch or 85% of sapwood
Creosote	6.0	
Penta	0.40	
ACA, ACZA	0.40	
ACC	0.50	
ACQ-B, ACQ-D	Pending	
CA-B	0.21	
CBA-A	0.41	
CCA-C	0.40	
<i>Ponderosa pine</i>		
Copper Naphthenate	0.055	2 inches or 85% of sapwood
Creosote	8.0	
Penta	0.40	
ACA, ACZA	0.40	
ACC	0.50	
ACQ-B, ACQ-D	Pending	
CA-A, CA-B	0.25	
CBA-A	Pending	
CCA-C	0.40	
<i>Douglas-fir</i>		
Copper Naphthenate	0.055	3/8 inch and 100% of sapwood up to 1 inch or 85% of sapwood
Creosote	8.0	
Penta	0.40	
ACQ-B, ACZA	0.40	
ACA	0.40	
CCA-C	0.40	
<i>Western hemlock, Western larch</i>		
Creosote	8.0	3/8 inch and 100% of sapwood up to 1 inch or 85% of sapwood
Penta	0.40	
ACA, ACZA	0.40	
ACC	0.50	
ACQ-B	Pending	
CCA-C	0.40	

\* "or" means whichever is less, "and" means whichever is more

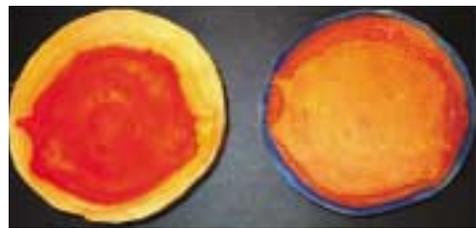
Proper Treatment



Note sapwood depth. Heartwood (orange) cannot be treated.

Good treatment penetration of 85% or more of sapwood conforms to AWPA standards.

Inferior Treatment



Note sapwood depth. Heartwood (orange) cannot be treated.

Poor treatment penetration due to excess moisture content. Poor service life will result.



### Properly treated roundwood posts and poles offer economic and other benefits

#### **Long life span reduces total costs**

The life span of a typical roundwood post can increase up to tenfold when treated to the AWPA C5 standard. For example, the life span of an untreated lodgepole pine post is just four to 12 years, whereas the properly treated version can last over 35 years. This can greatly reduce your total costs – materials, installation and replacement labor – over time.

#### **Superior strength**

Treated wood posts are exceptionally strong, providing a strength-to-weight ratio that is much higher than that for iron or steel. A force of 300 pounds applied 48 inches above the ground line will cause steel posts to fail, but it would take at least 400 pounds to cause a failure in a 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-inch wood post.

#### **Easy to install**

Properly treated quality roundwood posts are straight, have minimal taper, and are easy to use. Wood posts can be installed using a tractor-mounted post pounder or auger depending on soil conditions and preference of the installer.

#### **Holds well in soil**

Treated wood posts stay in the ground better because more surface area is in contact with the surrounding soil. If the soil is even slightly sandy, steel posts become unstable while properly installed wood posts stay solid in the ground.

#### **No maintenance required**

Posts treated to the AWPA C5 standard require very little upkeep. Montana highway workers report these posts give years of maintenance-free service and they have never had a wood signpost actually wear out.

#### **Wood has natural beauty**

Properly treated wood posts look good and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape by blending seamlessly with their surroundings.

### Treated wood posts last a long time

Properly treated quality wood posts and poles can mean the difference between a fencing or building project that will weather decades instead of just years. Don't settle for an inferior product. Ask your supplier for quality roundwood posts treated to AWPA C5 standard for your next project.

## Resources for treated wood posts and poles

Check your Yellow Pages for local sources of pressure-treated wood posts and poles. Additional information on products, preservatives and suppliers can be obtained from the following resources:



Intermountain Roundwood Association  
P.O. Box 805  
Seeley Lake, MT 59868  
(406) 677-2300

Western Wood Preservers Institute  
7017 NE Highway 99, Suite 108  
Vancouver, WA 98665  
1-800-729-9663  
[www.wwpinstitute.org](http://www.wwpinstitute.org)

American Wood Preservers' Association  
[www.awpa.com](http://www.awpa.com)

The nonprofit Intermountain Roundwood Association represents the economic and educational interests of producers and marketers of roundwood and associated products in the Western United States.