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The authors consider the first order neutral difference equation

$$E \quad \Delta \left(x_n - \frac{r_n}{r_{n-r}} x_{n-\tau} \right) + q_n x_{n-\sigma} = 0, \quad n = 0, 1, \dots$$

where $\{q_n\}$ is a sequence of nonnegative real numbers, $\{q_n\}$ is not eventually zero, $\{r_n\}$ is a nondecreasing sequence of positive real numbers, $\tau \geq 1$ is an integer, $\sigma \geq 0$ is an integer, and $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{r_n} = \infty$. We show that all positive solutions of (E) must be one of four types, and we give conditions for solutions of these types to exist. (Received October 03, 2000)