

## **Animal Trails and Walkways (Ft.) 575**

### **DEFINITION**

Established lanes or travel ways that facilitate animal movement.

### **PURPOSES**

- Provide or improve access to forage, water, working/handling facilities, and/or shelter;
- Improve grazing efficiency and distribution; and/or
- Protect ecologically sensitive, erosive, and/or potentially erosive sites.

### **CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On lands where control of animal movement is needed to facilitate access, improve grazing, prevent erosion, and/or protect ecologically sensitive areas.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **General Criteria Applicable for All Purposes**

Animal trails and walkways shall be planned, designed, and installed to meet all federal, state, local, and tribal laws and regulations.

The landowner shall obtain all necessary permits prior to construction or any land clearing activities.

Animal trails or walkways shall be constructed wide enough to accommodate movement of animals and access by operator for management and maintenance.

Trails or walkways shall be constructed in such a manner that accelerated erosion will not occur. Where necessary, diversions with a stable outlet will be provided.

Sensitivity of the animal's feet, with respect to the intended purpose of the trail or walkway, will be included as a design parameter in selecting the surface material for trails or walkways.

Trails or walkways seeded or planted to vegetative cover will be protected from grazing until the vegetation is fully established and capable of withstanding grazing and/or trampling. Vegetative cover shall be established in accordance with Conservation Practice Standard 342, Critical Area Planting. Where maintaining vegetative cover is not possible, Conservation Practice Standard 561, Heavy Use Area Protection, will be used to provide adequate surface protection.

Use vegetation adapted to the site that will accomplish the desired purpose. Preference shall be given to native species in order to reduce the introduction of invasive plant species; provide management of existing invasive species; and minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species may cause. If native plant materials are not adaptable or proven effective for the planned use, then non-native species may be used. Refer to the Field Office Technical Guide, Section II, Invasive Plant Species for plant materials identified as invasive species.

Conservation Practice Standard 382, Fence, will be used when needed to keep animals confined to the trail or walkway until the desired destination is reached.

For travel ways used by vehicles or equipment, for purposes other than management and maintenance of animal trails or walkways, use Conservation Practice Standard 560, Access Road.

Use Conservation Practice Standard 578, Stream Crossing, where animal trails or walkways cross streams or other shallow water bodies.

#### **Additional Criteria Applicable to Providing or Improving Access to Forage, Water, Working/Handling Facilities, and/or Shelter**

Trails and walkways will be designed and constructed of sufficient size to accommodate the expected frequency of use and animal type(s) planned for the operation.

For areas of high livestock concentration, such as around ponds, tanks, troughs, or other feeding areas, use Conservation Practice Standard 561, Heavy Use Area Protection.

When needed to facilitate movement of animals through a series of paddocks or pastures, gate openings and lane layouts shall allow for efficient flow of animals with the least amount of stress.

**Additional Criteria Applicable to Improving  
Grazing Efficiency and Distribution**

Fenced or unfenced animal trails or walkways will be used to distribute grazing to overcome terrain features causing uneven grazing distribution and pressure.

**Additional Criteria Applicable to Protection of  
Ecologically Sensitive Areas.**

Cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, wetlands, streambanks, floodways or other ecologically sensitive areas, and areas of special scenic value will be protected through the proper design of trail(s) or walkway(s).

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider the potential effects of installation and operation of animal trails or walkways on the cultural, archeological, historic, and economic resources.

Consider using Conservation Practice Standard 528, Prescribed Grazing, to further improve grazing distribution and pressure.

Consider other conservation practices, such as Conservation Practice Standard 472, Use Exclusion, in conjunction with trails or walkways to minimize the impact on sensitive areas.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications shall be prepared in accordance with the criteria of this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended use.

Support data documentation requirements are as follows:

- Inventory and evaluation records
  - Assistance notes or special report
- Survey notes, where applicable
  - Design survey
  - Construction layout survey
  - Construction check survey
- Design records
  - Physical data, functional requirements, and site constraints, where applicable
  - Soils/subsurface investigation report, where applicable
- Design and quantity calculations

- Construction drawings/specifications with:
  - Location map
  - “Designed by” and “Checked by” names or initials
  - Approval signature
  - Job class designation
  - Initials from preconstruction conference
  - As-built notes
- Construction inspection records
  - Assistance notes or separate inspection records
  - Construction approval signature
- Record of any variances approved, where applicable
- Record of approvals of in-field changes affecting function and/or job class, where applicable.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

An Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plan shall be developed for this practice. The O&M plan shall be consistent with the purposes of the practice, its intended life, safety requirements, and the criteria for the design.