

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
RHODE ISLAND**

ANIMAL TRAILS AND WALKWAYS

(Ft.)

CODE 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 THIS PRACTICE APPLIES

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

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Laws and Regulations. All Federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations, including local inland wetland agency regulations, governing the construction and use of this practice as well as setbacks from wells, surface water and property boundaries shall be followed. Planned work shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws and permit conditions and requirements. **The landowner shall obtain all necessary permits prior to construction or any land clearing activities.**

Minimum width shall be eight (8) feet. 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 the risk of accelerated erosion is minimized.

Surface diversions with a stable outlet or subsurface drainage will be provided where needed. Water breaks or water bars shall be in accordance Rhode Island NRCS Standard 560, Access Road.

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 Rhode Island NRCS Standard 342, Critical Area Planting. Where maintaining vegetative cover is not possible, Rhode Island NRCS Standard 561, Heavy Use Area Protection shall be used to provide adequate surface protection.

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

Hydraulics: Animal walkways which traverse natural watercourses or swales shall either be designed with culverts with a minimum capacity for passage of a two-year storm before overtopping the walkway, or by installation of a stabilized ford. Culverts and fords shall be installed so as not to significantly impact fish

migration. When animal walkways cross a designed diversion, the culvert capacity shall have at least the same capacity as the diversion.

Soil Mechanics and Surface Treatment:

Finished surfaces of animal walkways may be vegetative or non-vegetative consisting of free-draining well-graded sand or gravel. In wetland areas or where weak bearing capacity soils are encountered, such as organics, silts and clays, a surface treatment of sand and gravel may need to be underlain with a geotextile specifically designed for road stabilization applications. In areas where fords are used, traditional channel linings, cellular geocomposites, turf reinforcement mats or other stabilizing measures shall be installed.

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.

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

Rhode Island NRCS Standard 528A, Prescribed Grazing, can be used to further improve grazing distribution and pressure.

Other conservation practices, such as Rhode Island NRCS Standard 472, Use Exclusion can

be used in conjunction with trails or walkways to minimize the impact on sensitive areas.

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

For travelways used by vehicles or equipment for purposes other than management and maintenance of animal trails or walkways, use Rhode Island NRCS Standard 560, Access Road.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. Plans and specifications shall include construction plans, drawings, job sheets or other similar documents. These documents shall as a minimum, specify the requirements for installing the practice and include the kind, quantity and quality of materials to be used.

To the extent practical, specifications shall conform to NRCS National Engineering Handbook Parts 642 and 643 (Section 20).

AS-BUILT DRAWINGS

As built drawings shall be prepared showing all pertinent element and elevations as actually installed, and a copy shall be provided to the owner / operator upon construction completion.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared for, reviewed and signed by the landowner or operator. The plan shall specify that the treated areas and associated practices are inspected annually and after significant storm events to identify repair and maintenance needs.

The O&M plan shall detail the level of repairs needed to maintain the effectiveness and useful life of the practice. These repairs should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Periodic grading or re-shaping trails or walkways to maintain the designed grade and dimensions,

- Periodic addition of surfacing materials where needed,
- Re-seeding of areas in which the vegetation has been damaged or destroyed, and/or
- Mending of fences and replacement of gates.

Periodic removal and management of manure accumulations will be addressed in the O&M plan.

For multiple adjacent vegetated walkways the O&M plan should provide guidance as to the rotation of walkways to allow for recovery of vegetation and for improvement of traffic - supporting conditions.