

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**ANIMAL TRAILS AND WALKWAYS**

(Feet)

**CODE 575**

**DEFINITION**

A travel facility for livestock and/or wildlife to provide movement through difficult or ecologically sensitive terrain.

**PURPOSES**

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- \* Provide or improve access to forage, water and/or shelter.
- \* Improve grazing efficiency and distribution.
- \* Divert travel away from ecologically sensitive and/or erosive sites.

**CONDITIONS WHERE THIS PRACTICE APPLIES**

On grazing lands where animal movement is impeded or restricted such as, steep rough terrain, across rock outcrops, through dense timber or brush, and grazing lands susceptible to overflow by water. This practice also applies to animal movement between paddocks or pastures where unstable and/or erosive conditions exist.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria**

All animal trails and walkways shall be designed and installed in accordance to all local, state and federal laws, regulations and permits.

Trails or walkways shall be constructed wide enough to accommodate movement of livestock and access by operator. For dairy cattle a width of 12 feet is generally recommended.

Trails or walkways shall be constructed in such a manner that accelerated erosion will not occur. Contaminated runoff from trails and walkways shall be diverted to a storage or treatment facility. Where necessary diversions with a safe outlet will be provided along with other practices to divert clean off site runoff water away from the trails and walkways. Culverts installed to convey clean runoff water under the walkway shall have the capacity to handle a 10 year - 24 hour rain event.

Trails or walkways seeded or planted to vegetative cover will be protected from grazing until planting material is fully established and capable of withstanding grazing and/or trampling.

Trails or walkways that will not support vegetation shall be stabilized with a surface treatment, such as gravel with filter fabric, asphalt, concrete or other non-erosive load bearing product. Except for short reaches trails and walkways surfaced with concrete, asphalt or other smooth material shall be no steeper than five percent. Roughening of all smooth surfaces regardless of grade is recommended. Trails and walkways surfaced with gravel or other coarse materials shall be no steeper than seven percent.

A geotextile or other approved sub-base shall be designed and installed on all gravel and other trails and walkways constructed of "soft" materials.

**Criteria Applicable For Walkways**

Walkways will be constructed to meet minimum height requirements above normal high water.

During the construction process of walkways, borrow pits will be staggered so that access to grazing areas and back to walkway will be available from either side.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

When necessary structures will be installed to prevent interference with natural water movement or to control salt water intrusion.

Fencing associated with this practice shall be designed and installed in accordance to practice standard 382 - Fence.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Other practices that facilitate grazing distribution and proper intensity such as prescribed grazing should be implemented along with this practice.

The design and grade of animal trails and walkways should be adjusted if winter use is anticipated. The application of anti-skid materials should be planned for the safety of the animals.

### Water Quantity

1. Effects of grading on runoff and surface storage.
2. Effects of the amount and timing of infiltration.
3. Impacts of impervious trails or walkways on increased surface runoff.

### Water Quality

1. Effects of erosion and the movement of sediment and soluble sediment attached substances carries by runoff.
2. Effects caused by the construction process and the amount of vegetation re-established on the site.
3. Effects on wetlands and wildlife habitats.

## PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Each trail or walkway shall have a site specific design based on the criteria in this standard and as supplemented by additional criteria developed by each individual State using this practice.

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation will consist of periodic grading or shaping on trails and walkways to maintain designed dimensions. Maintenance will consist of periodic inspection and repair that may be needed following major storm events such as high runoff events, high tides or other occurrences that cause damage and interfere in the normal operation of this practice. Operation and maintenance shall also include periodic scraping and cleaning of manure accumulated on trails and walkways, especially in sensitive areas next to streams and water courses. An adequate buffer or filter shall be maintained between trails and walkways and streams and other water courses. Culverts, waterways, diversions and other practices associated with animal trails and walkways shall be cleaned out and maintained as needed. Anti-skid material shall be constantly applied to slick area, especially in the winter time. The winter use of some trails and walkways should be avoided if steep grades may be unsafe to livestock. Heavy equipment traffic on walkways and trails shall be restricted except for periodic cleaning and maintenance.

Maintenance needs are to be discussed with the landowner or operator who is responsible for maintaining the practices installed with NRCS assistance. Any hazards must be brought to the attention of the responsible person.

An operation and maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared for the Animal Trail or Walkway and any other associated conservation practices. Prior to construction, sufficient copies of the O&M plan shall be provided to the owner/operator, designer, and approving agencies. The owner shall sign the O&M plan to indicate an understanding of the requirements and a commitment to operate and maintain the area as specified.