

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

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, prevent erosion, and/or protect ecologically sensitive areas.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

All 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.

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 Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Critical Area Planting (342). Where maintaining vegetative cover is necessary but not possible, Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard and Specification, Heavy Use Area Protection (561) will be used to provide adequate surface protection.

The trail or walkway shall be adequately fenced, as needed, to control animal movement and/or access.

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 and vehicles with the least amount of stress.

Ramps may be used to allow animal access to a fenced pond. Studies of the pond area should be conducted to determine the best location for the ramp. Existing fences, grazing patterns, shoreline slope, and water depth

should be considered when choosing the optimum location for the ramp.

Ramps shall be planned and designed based on approved standard drawings. The slope of the ramp shall match as close as practical the shoreline slope of the pond to aid in construction. However, in no case shall the slope of the ramp be steeper than 3:1 (horizontal to vertical) or flatter than 5:1. If excavation is required, the areas to the sides of the ramp below shall be sloped to 2:1 or flatter.

The width of the ramp shall be adequate to provide animals with easy access to the pond and for maintenance purposes. The minimum width of a ramp shall be 8 feet. The requirements for width shall be a minimum of 1.0 foot of width for each 10 animal units.

The length of the ramp shall be sufficient to maintain access to water at varying water depths and to provide a stable base at the lower end of the ramp. A minimum water depth of 5 feet, measured from the designed permanent water level, is recommended. Where the pond depth is greater than 5 feet at the ramp location, excavation may be required to provide a stable base at the lower end. Additionally, the ramp shall extend a minimum of 0.5 feet above the designed permanent water level for freeboard.

Surfacing material, thickness, and other design criteria for ramps shall be in accordance with the Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard and Specification, Heavy Use Area Protection (561).

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

Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Prescribed Grazing (528), can be used to further improve grazing distribution and pressure.

Other Oklahoma NRCS conservation practices, such as Access Control (472) 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 Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard and Specification, Heavy Use Area Protection (561).

For travelways used by vehicles or equipment for purposes other than management and maintenance of animal trails or walkways, use Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Access Road (560). For ramps, consider widths that correspond to sizes of materials used. For instance, Geocells may be 8 feet wide; the design width should be divisible by 4 (i.e. 8, 12, 16, 20, etc.). This will limit waste of materials.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing animal trails or walkways 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 specify the requirements for installing the practice, including the location and the kind, amount, and quality of materials to be used.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The operation and maintenance (O&M) plan shall specify that the trails or walkways and associated practices be 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 used,
- 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.