

USDA  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION SERVICE

DELAWARE CONSERVATION  
PRACTICE STANDARD

**ANIMAL TRAILS AND  
WALKWAYS**

CODE 575  
(Reported by Ft.)

**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.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Conservation Practice Standard 528A, Prescribed Grazing, can be used to further improve grazing

distribution and pressure.

Other conservation practices, such as Use Exclusion, Code 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 Heavy Use Area Protection, Code 561.

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

This practice has the potential to affect National Register listed cultural resources or eligible (significant) cultural resources. These may include archeological, historic, or traditional cultural properties. Care should be taken to avoid adverse impacts to these resources. Follow NRCS state policy for considering cultural resources during planning.

**CRITERIA**

**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 of 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

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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 Critical Area Planting, Code 342. Where maintaining vegetative cover is necessary but not possible, Heavy Use Area Protection, Code 561 will be used to provide adequate surface protection.

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

**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 trails(s) or walkways(s).

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications for animal trails and walkways shall be prepared in accordance with the previously listed criteria. Plans and specifications shall contain sufficient detail to ensure successful implementation of this

practice. Documentation shall be in accordance with the section "Supporting Data and Documentation" in this standard.

**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:

1. Periodic grading or re-shaping trails or walkways to maintain the designed grade and dimensions,
2. Periodic addition of surfacing materials where used,
3. Re-seeding of areas in which the vegetation has been damaged or destroyed, and/or
4. 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.

**SUPPORTING DATA AND DOCUMENTATION**

The following is a list of the minimum data and documentation to be recorded in the case file:

1. Location the animal trails and walkways on the conservation map.
2. Assistance notes. The notes shall include dates of site visits, name or initials of the person who made the visit, specifics as to alternatives discussed, decisions made, and by whom.

**Field Data and Survey Notes**

The following is a list of the minimum data needed:

1. Plan view sketch.
2. Profile of existing ground along the proposed animal trail or walkway.
3. Cross-sections of the existing ground at the location of the animal trail or walkway.
4. Locations of all waterbodies or streams crossed.
5. Profile and cross-section of the waterbodies and streams at their intersection with the animal trail or walkway.

**Design Data**

Record on appropriate engineering paper. For guidance on the preparation of engineering plans see Chapter 5 of the Engineering Field Handbook - Part 650. The following is a list of the minimum required design data:

1. Determine soil type and any special restrictions.
2. Determine peak runoff from the contributing drainage area for the required design storm in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Engineering Field Handbook - Part 650 or by other approved method.
3. Design the animal trail or walkway alignment and profile in accordance with the requirements of this practice standard.
4. Show the engineering job class on the plans. Show the location description and elevation of temporary benchmarks utilized in the design survey. Provide a location map, which indicates the job site.
5. Plan view sketch, profile of animal trail or walkway and cross-sections of the existing ground and proposed animal trail or walkway are to be shown on the construction plans.

6. Details of animal trail or walkway surfacing, culverts, and outlet protection as well as other required structural components.
7. Planting plan. This must meet the criteria, specifications and documentation requirements of the conservation practice standard for Critical Area Planing (Code 342). Show on the plans.
8. Estimated quantities and cost estimate.
9. Written Operation and Maintenance Plan.

**Construction Check Data/As-Built Plans**

Record on survey notepaper, NRCS-ENG-28, or other appropriate engineering paper. Survey data will be plotted in red. The following is a list of minimum data needed for As-built documentation:

1. Check notes recorded during or after completion of construction showing grade and cross-section of the animal trail or walkway and components including length, top width, and grade as well as the size and grade of culverts and outlet protection.
2. Measure and document the length of trail and culverts.
3. Statement regarding the trail surface and seeding.
4. Final quantities and documentation for quantity changes. Material certifications as appropriate.
5. Signature and date on the check-notes and plans by someone with appropriate engineering job approval authority. Include a written statement that the constructed practice meets or exceeds the construction plans and NRCS practice standards.