

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

ANIMAL TRAILS AND WALKWAYS

(Ft.)

CODE 575

DEFINITION

Established lanes or travel ways that facilitate animal movement.

PURPOSE

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

NRCS 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.

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.

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

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, stream banks, erosive and/or potentially erosive sites, 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).

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

CONSIDERATIONS

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

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

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.

REFERENCES:

Heady, H.F. and R.D. Child. 1994. Rangeland ecology and management. Western Press.

Holechek, J.L., R.D. Pieper, and C.H. Herbel. 2004. Range management: principles and practices. Pearson-Prentice Hall.

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 2007. Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook. Washington, DC.

USDA-NRCS. 2003. National range and pasture handbook, revision 1. Washington, DC.

Vallentine, J.F. 1971. Range development and improvement. Brigham Young University Press.

Wood, Gene. 2007. Recreational horse trails in rural and wildland areas: design, construction and maintenance. Clemson University.