



Farm Access

Why change?

Infrastructure management is vital for all farmers. Modern farming has increased the pressure on farm tracks, fences, gates and roadways. Ensuring good infrastructure and efficient, safe, timely movement of both machinery and stock will help to:

- Improve safety
- protect animal health
- reduce transport and application costs
- protect productive land and improve timeliness of access
- protect water sources from pollution
- reduce your carbon footprint



Access tracks are sources of pollution

Steps to Success

1. **Review** the current situation by using your farm map to consider existing and any potential improvements to your access needs, e.g. for extending the grazing season. Identify the causes and potential remedies of any problems you identify.
2. **Identify** potential opportunities such as:
 - extending safe, timely access for all operations
 - using well drained tracks
 - diverting track run-off away from watercourses and dirty water systems in the farmyard, to sediment traps or rough grass buffer strips designed to settle solids
 - using purpose built livestock tracks to extend the grazing season and reduce lameness and soil loss
 - maintaining routes, especially on steeper gradients and through gateways
 - re-site gateways where channelled run-off is occurring
 - minimising damage to land and crops.
3. **Calculate** the cost-benefit of these opportunities by comparing the savings with the costs of labour, energy and materials necessary to improve or maintain farm tracks and gates. Identify the payback period and remember to take a long-term view of the benefits.
4. **Prioritise** the opportunities you have identified taking account of safety, animal health and environmental issues such as reducing the risk of water pollution.
5. **Develop** an action plan that takes account of these priorities, as well as the availability of labour, funds and other planned farm work, in order to decide when it is best to carry out the improvements.
6. **Implement** the action plan taking care to ensure that run-off from the work areas is diverted away from watercourses, preferably to settle solids in traps or rough grass. It is a requirement of cross compliance that every farm in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments must comply with Soil Protection Standards (GAEC5) and the Farming Rules for Water legislation
7. **Monitor** progress by making inspection of the farm tracks, erosion and run-off a routine part of your farm operations.



Farm Access - practical examples

Narrow Cow tracks.

The cost of 600m of track @ £35/m was £21,000 or £2,100/year of its 10-year life.

The reduced annual cost of lameness was assessed at £4/cow = £400, plus 25 minutes per day less udder cleaning time = £3650 and an average of £5.20/cow in reduced mastitis = £520.

The total annual saving was £4570.

Plus improved grazing management and housing costs.



Well maintained cattle tracks improve herd health

Self help track

In this actual example a farmer built a new 700m track to simplify grazing management for his high yielding herd thereby providing access to a 16 ha (40-acre) block, including a newly reseeded area.

The track was constructed using 2500 tonnes of blue-grey subsoil and stones excavated on-farm at a cost of £10/tonne = £25,000. It replaced a bark based track which was considered to have much higher maintenance costs.

The material was laid on the surface (during dry conditions) on a 3m (10ft) wide, high camber track.

The cost, including fencing and troughs was =£2,000, £1,687/ha with 20-year depreciation.

Remember

- Significant cost savings, improved timeliness and efficiency of operations result from good access.
- Design any new farm access to ensure that rainwater run-off drains to rough grass or a similar area.
- Keep your access roads clean to avoid run-off which adds to your dirty water management costs and increases the risk of water pollution.



This information sheet is part of a series produced by Westcountry Rivers Trust providing farmers with advice on land management practices to protect water bodies. The advice enables farmers to use farm resources more efficiently, helping to meet Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, Cross Compliance, Farming Rules for Water and other regulations while protecting our environment and natural resources.

While Westcountry Rivers Trust has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of this guidance it does not accept any liability arising from its use.

Copyright: Westcountry Rivers Trust
Registered Charity No. 1135007