

# Lameness Prevention: Roadways and Collecting Yards

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**T**his is the second in our series of bulletins looking at lameness prevention, with a focus on roadways and collecting yards. Good quality, well-designed roadways that are maintained regularly, play a major part in the prevention and reduction of lameness in the dairy herd.

## Roadways

- Roadways need to be sufficiently wide enough for the number of cows in the herd to allow them to move at their own pace and not feeling stressed and pressurised as they walk.  
**For a herd of 120 cows or less a width of 5m is recommended, with an extra 0.5m for every additional 100 cows thereafter.**
- Ensure the road surface is in good repair. This helps to reduce hoof trauma and white line damage. Suitable material for top dressing can often be sourced locally and needs to be mechanically compacted.
- A camber or slope from the middle of roadway to the edge is recommended. Allow for a 3% to 5% fall but no greater than 8%. This will provide a sufficient fall for the water on the roadway to get away and as a result will be comfortable for cows to walk on.
- Clear and trim trees and scrub along the cow path allowing the roadway to stay as clean and dry as possible.
- Entrances to the paddocks should be wider than the roadway to reduce bottlenecks. It is also important to make sure there are no distractions on roadways like water troughs as this will help with cow flow.
- Sweep and keep the concrete yard free of stones. Where the concrete yard meets the cow roadway, build a nib wall as this will prevent stones travelling onto the concrete.

To maintain roadways in good condition, minimize the use of **heavy machinery traffic**, including silage trailers and slurry tankers on the roadways. Instead drop the wire at the top of the paddock to give easy access to the heavy machinery and avoid using the roadway.

Ensure and prioritise the maintenance of the roadways that see the most traffic by the herd, especially those closest to the dairy.

For lame cows minimise walking distances even on a good roadway surface. Where possible keep a paddock close to the milking parlour for grazing by any lame cows.

The single most important factor in terms of the management of lameness in a grazing herd is the quality of the cow roadways.



## Collecting Yards

- Ensure the entrance to the collecting yard is at least as wide as the cow roadway leading into it.
- Avoid sharp turns in the yard.
- Keep concrete surfaces clean and in good repair, clean off any loose stones and slurry. The surface needs to be non-abrasive but also non-slippery.
- Ensure the collecting yard is of adequate size for your herd. 1.5m<sup>2</sup>/cow is required.
- Cows have a walking order and a milking order and they need space to make the transition to avoid foot trauma and damage.
- Use the backing gate to move cows gently into the milking parlour and do not push them in.

A good collecting yard will reduce the level of lameness in your herd.