

Media Article

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Livestock on public roads

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Livestock on roads can present risks to the public and stock handlers. It is the responsibility of both the livestock owner and road user to be vigilant when travelling on roads that are regularly used for grazing or moving stock.

Municipal councils and state road authorities administer guidelines for farmers, drivers and other people who may require a permit; or who are exempted by a local law from the need to have a permit to have stock on roads or road reserves.

Designated stock routes, municipal roads or declared arterial roads or freeways have differing requirements for managing safe stock access. The relevant authority will assess applications and determine:

- if a permit is required; and/or
- specific instructions for selecting stock crossing sites, signage, lighting; and/or
- specific conditions that need to be applied where stock graze or traverse along roads.

The VicRoads 'Manual for traffic control at stock crossings' has a short checklist that can be used to determine if a permit may be required; and it also includes schematics that show approved layouts for high-use and low-use stock crossings (refer to website shown below). It also details the appropriate type and/or size for flashing lights and signage to be used at the stock crossing sites.

<https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/traffic-and-road-use/traffic-management/stock-crossing-guidelines>

Key points from the manual

Low-use stock crossing sites: a low-use stock crossing site is one that is used less than 52 times in any twelve month period. In a dairy context this allows farmers to occasionally graze land not directly connected to the milking platform.

High-use stock crossing sites: a high-use stock crossing site is used 52 times or more in any twelve month period. Most dairy cattle will make two crossings a day e.g. when a road separates the milking shed and milking platform. It will be necessary to check with the appropriate authority as not all cases of stock movement will require a permit.

Stock grazing on the road reserve: planning permits or local law permits are required on declared arterial roads for grazing stock on the road reserve. The conditions that apply will depend on the road being classified as a designated stock route or if the property owner wishes to graze outside his property frontage.



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To assess the potential impact of stock on roads the stock handler should know the traffic volume and the location conditions. This will enable the relevant authorities to advise on alternative options such as overpasses, underpasses, or traffic signal installations that might be more suitable than a crossing with signs.

Safety tips for managing stock crossings and grazing road reserves

Lights: yellow or amber flashing hazard lights may be used on stock crossing sites to improve or enhance early warning systems for traffic safety.

Fencing: the owner or occupier of property where land is used for livestock must ensure that there is adequate fencing and gates to prevent livestock from straying onto roads, reserves or adjoining property. There is also an obligation to ensure that all fencing is maintained and kept in a serviceable condition.

Some authorities will encourage stock handlers to exit stock off the road and access the owners property at the first available point of entry. This will require the owner establishing appropriate internal fencing to move stock over distances, without the unnecessary use of the roads.

Stock supervision: all livestock movement across the road, along the roadways and/or reserves must be supervised and stock must be under effective control at all times. Stock should not be allowed to enter roads at their will and make their own way to the designated paddock. Stock must be penned on the owner's property prior to crossing, and taken across the road as a group, so as to minimise the time they are on the road.

Road underpass: livestock underpasses have been used successfully by the dairy industry for many years, enabling the dairy herd and stock handlers to pass under roadways, without being hindered or put at risk. Underpasses are generally constructed by a contractor and it is the responsibility of the land owner to ensure that the structure complies with the standards advised by the responsible authority.

Managing sediments deposited on the road at the crossing site: some authorities may use local discretion and place specific conditions requiring the stock owner to wash or scrape the road surface within a reasonable time following stock exiting to remove manure and sediment deposited by the cattle. This will improve traction for motorists as manure/mud in wet weather can become slippery.

Mats across roads: heavy duty matting products have been trailed and used successfully in some dairy regions. The mats are designed to let water and urine through, but collect manure and mud. The mat is then removed once the cattle have crossed the road, collecting the mud and manure and protecting the road surface.