

July 2016

5b. Sign project with Rural Women New Zealand Fact Sheet



New Zealanders and overseas visitors value access to the outdoors and rural landholders have traditionally granted recreational access across their land to those who ask.

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission has worked with Rural Women New Zealand to formalise this arrangement by sponsoring the development of an access sign that landholders can use to voluntarily grant access across private land.

This type of signage project was first suggested by Federated Farmers New Zealand in 2010, and signs sponsored by Federated Farmers and the Commission are currently in use around the country.

The initial production run of the signs has been funded by the Commission and signs will be distributed to landholders on request. Landholders may place the signs on their property at their discretion, subject to the agreed usage guidelines in this fact sheet.

Once placed, the Commission may display the locations of landowner-approved access points online on its websites and/or mapping system (www.wams.org.nz). Visit www.walkingaccess.govt.nz for further information about the mapping system and the Commission's *Outdoor Access Code*, which describes responsible behaviour in the outdoors.

The Commission recognises the importance of property rights to New Zealand's society and economy, and works to ensure property rights in both private land and public land are respected. This approach is supported by Rural Women New Zealand.

For further information about the signage project, or to request a sign, contact the Commission on (04) 815 8502 or email contact@walkingaccess.govt.nz.

The sign

The sign developed by the Commission and Rural Women New Zealand is designed to be placed upon a fence or similar structure to show an agreeable entry point or route across private property. Landholders may wish to mark a route across their property using metal poles or waratahs.

Provision is made on the sign for landholders to include contact details for members of the public who wish to request access or ask permission to bring guns or dogs onto the property. Accompanying sticker sheets are also provided for landholders who wish to impose conditions on access to their property (e.g. no fires or no dogs) or temporarily close access to their property while a hazard people wouldn't normally expect on a farm exists on a route they have marked for public access.

Guidelines for use

The sign is designed to mark access across private land. It is not to be used to identify public land, such as unformed legal road or marginal strips.

As a condition of the Commission's sponsorship landholders are asked to advise the location of the signs using GPS coordinates. These should be advised to the Commission on the attached form, which also serves as authority for their location to be displayed on any of the Commission's websites

There are two options for landholders who wish to use the signs:

1. Signs may be used to mark routes where landholders are happy for the public to access their land without having to phone to ask permission. Those using the sign in this way may wish to mark out an agreeable

route and use the provided 'Follow marked route' sticker.

2. Signs may be used to mark an access point that a landholder is happy for people to use after they have phoned and been granted permission. Those using the sign in this way should include contact details on the sign using the provided 'For access, call xx' sticker.

» Accompanying the sign is a set of stickers that can be used to indicate any conditions landholders wish to impose on access to their private land.

» A second set of stickers is supplied for landholders who wish to temporarily close access to their property. Landholders temporarily closing access to their property should also notify the Commission so the closure can be noted on the Walking Access Mapping System.

» The signs can be screwed to a wall or gate or hung on a fence with electrical cable ties or stainless steel/aluminium wire.

» Signs need to be legible. Should there be weathering or vandalism, the landowner will need to replace the signs with new ones. These are available from the Commission or Rural Women New Zealand.

» Landholders using the sign remain fully responsible for permitting, refusing and managing public access on their private property. In the event of a complaint from the public that signs are being misused the Commission reserves the right to withdraw its permission to use its name on the sign.

» If a landholder wishes to withdraw the access to their property permanently, they should contact the Commission in Wellington on (04) 815 8502. At this point, the information displaying sign locations and conditions of entry to their property will be removed from any Commission websites.

Section 66 of the *Walking Access Act 2008* exempts landholder's from liability under the *Occupier's Liability Act 1962* for any loss or damage suffered by a person using walking access on the landholder's land unless caused by the landholder's deliberate act or omission. This exemption does not apply to vehicle access.

» Farmers have an obligation under the *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015* to warn authorised visitors to the farm if a hazard arises from some work activity on the farm which is out of the ordinary and could cause a person serious harm. Examples include trees being felled, blasting, earthmoving machinery operating or where pest control operators are working. If these types of activities are being carried out near the route marked for public access then it would be prudent to temporarily close the access.

Failure to temporarily close the access or adequately warn people using the access when a significant out-of-the-ordinary workplace hazard exists may result in liability under the *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015*, if an authorised visitor is injured.

For more specific information in relation to the duty to warn authorised visitors of hazards on farmland, visit the *Health and safety responsibilities of farmers to recreational visitors* FAQ on our website.