

## The use of footpaths and rights of way in Crayke Parish

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### Part A: Walking and access around Crayke Parish

Crayke benefits from a network of footpaths through our splendid countryside. These provide a valuable contribution to our health and wellbeing. They also carry responsibilities on behalf of both walkers who use them, and farmers and landowners on whose land they pass.

#### Footpaths through fields

There are several places where footpaths cross fields, and many others where footpaths follow the edges of fields, within Crayke.

**Public rights and concerns:** The public have a right to use designated public footpaths at any time, unless a temporary closure is in place by the local authority (such as for essential maintenance). This right includes the right to walk dogs, which should be kept under close control (meaning on a leash unless the dog can be guaranteed to be controlled by command). Where livestock are present dogs should be on a short leash (unless the livestock threaten the safety of the walker, in which case it can be advisable to release the dog).

**Farmer rights and concerns:** Farmers have understandable concerns that walkers should not damage their crops, including grass and other grazing crops, by wandering from the footpath. Whilst farmers are aware of public rights of way across their land, they also have a right to carry out their farming business without damage to their crops and livestock. It is also legal for farmers to apply fertilisers and manures, within specified regulations and guidelines.

#### Dog fouling

A major concern of farmers is dog fouling in fields. It is a criminal offence for owners to allow dogs to foul public rights of way. Both dogs and foxes can carry the disease organism responsible for Neosporosis, a disease which can cause abortions in infected cattle, and may require infected cattle to be culled.

For this reason dog fouling on farmland, even in open grass fields, should be avoided. The Countryside Code says dog poo should be bagged and binned.

#### Slurry and manure application

Organic fertilisers, including farmland manures and slurries, can be applied within relevant regulations. This includes onto fields through which footpaths pass.

Normal practice for grass fields which are cut for hay or silage is to apply manures during spring to autumn months, soon after cutting. This is normally only once or twice per year (rarely three times). This means the field may be unpleasant for walkers and dogs to cross immediately after application, for a period of a few days to a week or more, until subsequent rainfall and grass growth reduce the odour and other effects.

## **Possible solutions to these concerns**

Crayke Parish Council are continually working with farmers and parishioners to address concerns and seek ways to ensure the best compromises to address all concerns and preserve good will. These are a few proposals of actions that can be taken:

### **Farmer/Landowner actions**

#### **a. Accessibility**

1. Ensure that footpaths remain accessible (a width of 1.5 metres should remain uncultivated at field edges, and paths restored immediately after cultivating in-field paths).
2. Do not block paths, or lock gates unless a stile or alternative walker access is available. Where a path is permissive (ie by the permission of the landowner) such paths can be locked, and normally are for a period each year, usually for a temporary, short period.

#### **b. When applying slurry or manures**

1. Voluntary notification before manure/slurry is applied (to warn walkers who may wish to take an alternative route). The Parish Council can help with signage.
2. Voluntarily offering an alternative, temporary diversion (on their own land or by permission). For example a temporary permission to divert from a cross-field path to a field edge path.
3. Voluntarily leaving a separation zone or untreated area around a field edge path

### **Members of Public actions:**

1. Know, and stick to designated rights of way. By law walkers and their dogs should not wander from the designated footpath.
2. Keep dogs under control, and pick up dog poo especially on footpaths and within grass and forage cropped fields.
3. Change route for a few days after manure spreading. Look out for notices from farmers to advise such changes and comply with temporary permissions to take different routes.
4. Never leave open a gate unless it was already left open by the owner. If in doubt shut all gates. Never break gates, fences or locks. This constitutes the offence of criminal damage.