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ROADS ERODE

By B. a'B. MARSH, B.Sc. (Agric.), Adviser, Soil Conservation Service.

There is no wheatbelt farm in this State without eroded roads or tracks! That might appear to be a sweeping statement—but pause a while and consider your own property. On how many chains of your farm roads are you controlling the water in a practical manner?

Most of the tracks on your property are formed by nothing more than the continuous passage of vehicles over the same ground.

Soil in wheel marks becomes depressed, the ruts collect water and on sloping ground the running water gradually—and sometimes suddenly—deepens the ruts.

When these become too deep or rough, do you fill them in or do you merely move the track a few yards to one side, accentuating the erosion hazard?

EROSION HAZARD

This problem of road erosion is serious because of its widespread nature. Apart from appearances, vehicle damage and impassability in wet periods, the Soil Conservation Service is concerned because the concentration of water by farm tracks is a serious hazard, also, while carrying out advisory work, the S.C.S. officers have to drive over those tracks.

Public road-making authorities are usually able to keep surplus water off their road surfaces; your farm tracks can be treated in the same way to achieve the same results. Notice on your next trip to town how water is controlled on public roads.

Firstly, the road is formed into a crown by the use of graders. The initial formation has to be carried out by powerful machines, the small road patrol graders and grader-ditchers being unsuitable except for maintenance. On the farm, the disc plough will move enough soil in about six or more rounds to give you a reasonably good formed road. Better still, try to hire a 70 h.p. or larger road grader.

This formation of a road is cheaper than you think. At 10s. to 15s. a chain, how much would it cost you to form safe roads on your property?

Notice also, that at short intervals downhill, there are small drains which divert water to the side of the road. These are safety valves which prevent large quanti-
ties of water from accumulating on the road surface. If these small outlet drains are blocked—and they frequently are—too much water flows to the bottom of the hill, causing damage to roads and paddocks.

Culverts, pipes and spoon drains prevent water from collecting on the uphill side of formed roads.

By studying the public roads you can see what is applicable to the tracks on your farm.

**CONTOURS**

Though you won’t see public roads built on the contour, roads built in this manner may have some use on the farm where soil conservation contour farming is practiced. Contour roads should be situated below contour banks as the banks then protect the roads from running water.

All roads cannot be built on the contour as many have to travel uphill. Water control is easier when roads travel directly uphill. In such a case, water flowing to the side drains of a formed road can be diverted to grassed strips on either side.

Think about it.

Can you afford to leave your roads in their present condition?

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