

## Soft walking, safe footing: what makes for animal-friendly walking areas

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**Walking surfaces have a decisive influence on how safely and willingly dairy cows move around the barn. A soft, slip-resistant and easy-to-clean surface relieves the hooves, promotes animal activity and therefore supports animal welfare, health and performance.**

In a free-stall barn, dairy cows cover many distances every day: to feed, water, milking and back to the free stall. How safe and comfortable these routes are has a direct impact on the animals' well-being. Cows need to be able to move freely around the barn - including lower-ranking animals that need to avoid another cow or access important functional areas at a later time.

An animal-friendly walking surface must therefore meet several requirements: it needs to be **soft enough** to relieve the hooves and joints, while also providing **secure footing** and being **easy to clean** in everyday barn use.



Comfort behavior can be observed more frequently on animal-friendly walking areas © KRAIBURG Elastik

### Why cows walk more safely on soft grounds

The cattle hoof is designed for walking on yielding natural ground. On an elastic rubber flooring, the **longer outer hoof** can **sink in slightly**. This distributes the weight more evenly across both hooves and reduces the pressure on individual areas.

On hard concrete surfaces, this natural sinking-in is not possible. Peak pressure can have a greater impact on the hooves and joints, especially when turning, moving aside or standing for extended periods. In contrast, soft flooring supports a more natural movement pattern and can help **reduce mechanically induced stress on the hooves**.

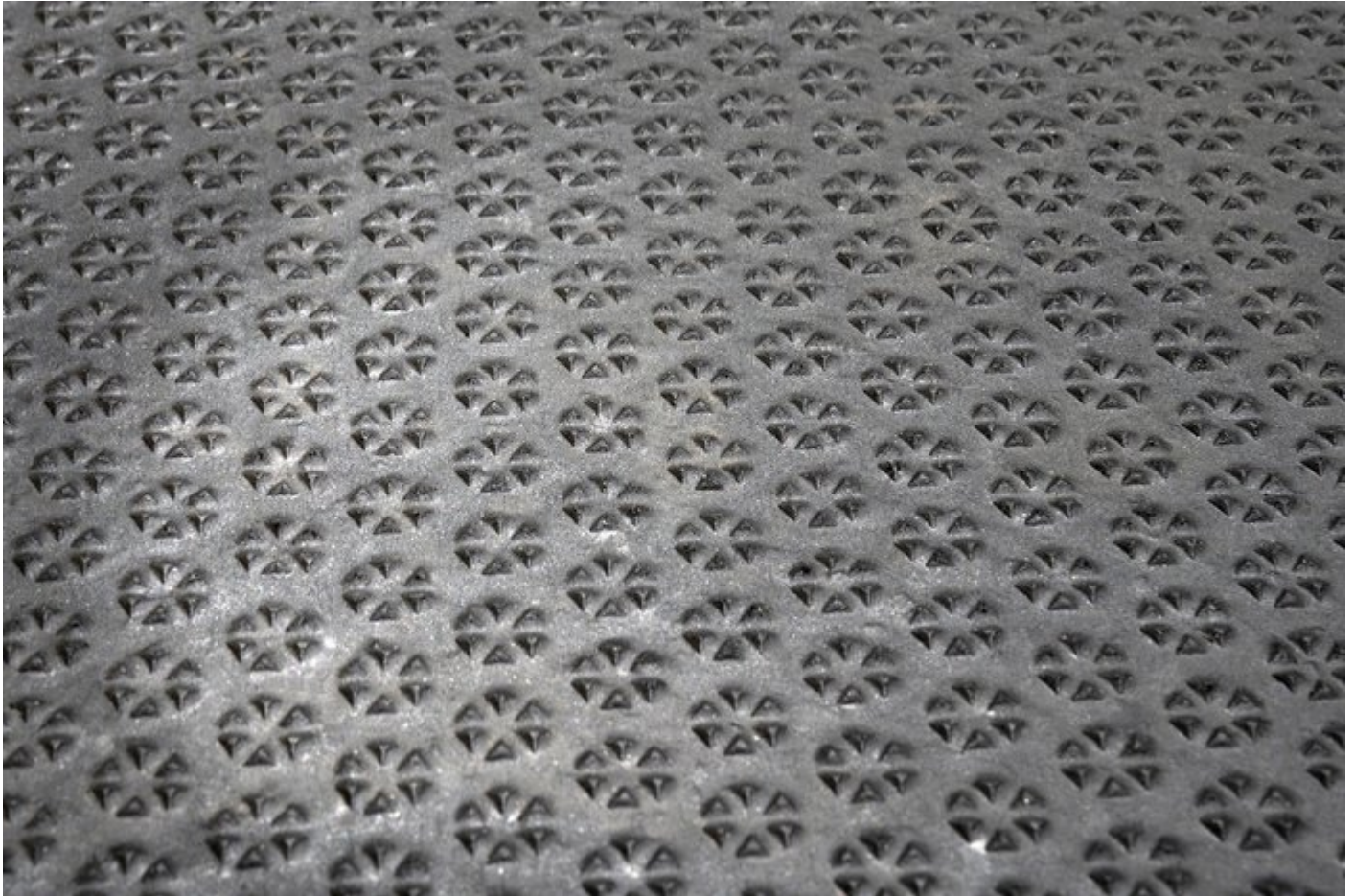


Secure footing is particularly important during mounting © KRAIBURG Elastik

## Sure-footedness allows freedom of movement

In addition to softness, secure footing is crucial. Cows move cautiously when they perceive surfaces as slippery. They then walk more slowly, avoid certain routes or display insecure movements. This can affect feed intake, access to water, heat detection and social behavior within the herd.

A slip-resistant, sure-footed surface gives animals **confidence when walking, turning, getting up and moving aside**. In particular, it makes it easier for lower-ranking cows to avoid conflict situations and use the barn independently.



The optiGrip surface promotes good slip resistance and optimized hoof abrasion © KRAIBURG Elastik

## Hoof abrasion: crucial in the right place

Hoof abrasion is an important factor in hoof shape. Hard-abrasive floors wear the hoof flat, causing the weight-bearing rim - and therefore the natural concavity - to be lost.

Soft-abrasive walking alley surfaces can provide targeted compensation here. In KRAIBURG walking area mats with **optiGrip surface**, the integrated abrasive material corundum promotes **functional hoof abrasion**. The surface thus combines slip resistance with support for a correct hoof form.



Animal-friendly soft walking areas that are easy to clean also help to reduce emissions © KRAIBURG Elastik

## Cleanliness and dryness are part of it

Even the best walking surface can only fully deliver its benefits if it remains clean and as dry as possible. Moisture and mixtures of manure and urine stress the skin around the hoof and increase **germ pressure**. In addition, rapid separation of feces and urine promotes barn hygiene and contributes to **emission reduction**. An **adequate slope, reliable urine drainage and a suitable manure removal system** are therefore key elements of an animal-friendly walking flooring concept.

**Flat-textured, easy-to-clean rubber flooring** supports daily cleaning. Combined with a scraper system matched to the flooring or a suitable cleaning robot, it helps to **keep walking areas dry** and **promotes hoof health in the long term**.



Healthy hooves carry the milk © KRAIBURG Elastik

## Walking areas as part of the overall concept

A good walking surface helps cows to remain active, move safely and reach all key barn areas without hesitation. It is therefore an important component of **animal welfare** and an **economically successful dairy farm**.

When planning or renovating, factors such as **animal-friendly softness, slip resistance, hoof abrasion and manure removal** should therefore always be considered together. This results in a walking area that meets the cows' natural needs and functions reliably in everyday use.



Animal-friendly soft and slip-resistant walking areas are the foundation for animal welfare and performance © KRAIBURG Elastik

#### Further information:

Press information [Dry walking areas, fewer emissions](#)

<https://kraiburg-elastik.com/company/press/dry-walking-areas-good-for-hooves-barn-hygiene-and-the-environment/>

Guide [Healthy hooves](#) <https://kraiburg-elastik.com/guidance/expert-knowledge/healthy-hooves-thanks-to-rubber-mat-with-slope/>

Guide [Emission reduction](#) <https://kraiburg-elastik.com/guidance/expert-knowledge/reducing-emissions/>

Guide [Optimal walking areas](#) <https://kraiburg-elastik.com/guidance/animal-welfare/optimal-walking-areas-in-dairy-barns/>

Guide [Effects of lameness](#) <https://kraiburg-elastik.com/guidance/economic-efficiency/lameness/>

Guide [Hoof trimming](#) <https://kraiburg-elastik.com/guidance/animal-welfare/hoof-health/>

Information on [Dry walking areas](#) <https://kraiburg-elastik.com/dry-walking-areas/>

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## About KRAIBURG Elastik

Gummiwerk KRAIBURG Elastik GmbH & Co. KG has been developing and manufacturing elastic rubber flooring for cattle and horse housing since 1968. In Tittmoning, Germany, around 200 employees combine experience in rubber processing with practical product development. The aim is to support animal welfare, safety, performance and efficient barn management with innovative solutions. The DIN-compliant products are tested in the company's own laboratory, in test barns and by independent institutes. KRAIBURG Elastik holds the DLG quality seal 'CONTINUOUS MONITORING'. The barn flooring specialist is committed to resource-saving production and repurposes tire rubber as a raw material for robust flooring. The company is part of the KRAIBURG Group.

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