



Grooming Cross Country Ski Trails

Have you ever wondered why there is snow on today's grooming. Or why the trail grooming at Telemark can get poor, or stops altogether, when the snow becomes wet from warm weather or rain. Why do we groom according to a changing plan?

Our first consideration is; is it safe for everyone involved. We endeavor to groom once a day, early in the morning when the trails are more likely to be below freezing. Grooming costs our non-profit volunteer run sport club \$ 275 an hour. It is by far our largest single expense so we try to manage it with a plan that changes with the weather.

We do not have the grooming team on call during the day to come in case it snows, or if a particular trail is well used, as it is very expensive and more likely to render poor results. When it snows during a day we don't chase the grooming. Less used trails are groomed less often. We do not groom when the snow is not frozen such as in the afternoon (see below).

Wet snow is a problem for cross country trail grooming equipment. If you ball snow in your fist and it sticks together, and/or water drips out from between your fingers, it is wet. If grooming occurs in these conditions, even with a high quality grooming machine like Telemark's Piston Bully Edge, the tiller on the back will not shape the snow. The snow can clog and stick to a large metal cylinder in the tiller that creates the corduroy effect on the trails, for skate skiing. You will notice a groove and balls of snow in the middle of trail when this has happened. The classic tracks will also be weak.

Grooming with a snowmobile pulling the normal grooming attachments will not shape the trail snow as the snow sticks to the grooming devices. (Much like wet snow sticks to the bottom of your skis if you don't wax them.) You will not see this happening as often at cross country ski clubs that are higher because the snow does not get wet as often, due to generally colder temperatures at higher elevations.

Warm weather (or rain) saturates the snow with water. A problem can occur if there is a change in the weather pattern, when the snow is wet. If the temperature drops below zero, the wet snow freezes. The shape of the frozen trails will not change until the next warm weather. At Telemark we try to minimize this problem by using a renovator, a steel blade with long teeth that is lowered a few inches under the previously groomed trail to rip out ice, before the tiller on the back shapes the trail. There has to be a certain depth of snow to use a renovator as repairs are costly.

The Telemark grooming team has many, many years of experience grooming cross country ski trails. They have attended a program in cross country grooming by Cross Country Canada, and are equipped with the most modern, maintained equipment. We are doing all they can to provide top notch grooming, but are limited by weather conditions like wet snow, and must consider the cost of grooming.