



LIVESTOCK FARMING SECTOR

Water Resilience Guide



For busy farmers water resilience is about Protecting Livestock & Minimising Risk

Welcome to your guide on Water Resilience for the Livestock sector. Climate change is already presenting major difficulties in the agricultural world. With the wettest winters and driest summers on record, we are approaching a time when demand for water will dramatically outstrip supply. From dairy and beef to poultry and pigs, water is central to animal welfare, productivity, and hygiene. Rising costs, unpredictable weather, and stricter regulation mean that managing water efficiently is essential for resilient and profitable operations.



Why Water Matters to Your Farm, Right Now:

- **Animal Welfare:** Consistent, clean supply is critical, any failure risks health and production.
- **Hidden Costs:** Leaks in drinkers & troughs, overuse in parlours, and inefficient cleaning drain money.
- **Regulatory Pressure:** Pollution from slurry and runoff faces tighter control.
- **Real Savings:** Efficient systems can cut water use by 10–25%, lowering bills and reducing energy for pumping.

Your Water Footprint: Where It Goes & Why It Matters

- **Dairy Cows (50–over 100 L/day each):** Drinking water plus parlour washdown, plate coolers, and yard cleaning.
- **Beef Cattle & Sheep (30–60 L/day):** Trough supply, often at pasture prone to undetected leaks.
- **Pigs (10–20 L/day):** High use in farrowing and finishing units, slurry dilution, and pen cleaning.
- **Poultry (per 1000: 50–470 L/day):** Drinking lines, cooling pads, cleaning sheds.
- **Milking Parlours (10–15% of farm use):** Cleaning lines, tanks, and equipment.
- **Cooling & Process Water:** Plate coolers in dairy can be a large but recoverable flow.

Understanding the split highlights where savings have the biggest effect.

Quick Wins: Immediate Savings, Minimal Effort

- **Automatic Drinkers:** Shut-off valves stop overflowing and reduce waste when not in use.
- **Pressure Washers:** Use 50–70% less water than hoses for yards and parlours.
- **Routine Checks:** Fix leaks in troughs and parlour pipes.
- **Timed Sprayers & Misters:** Prevent overuse in hot weather where possible.
- **Re-use Wash Water:** First rinse from parlours can be used for yard cleaning.

These changes cut waste immediately, protecting margins.



Smart Investments: Future-Proofing for Long-Term Value

- **Smart Investments:** Future-Proofing for Long-Term Value
- **Water Recycling Systems:** For parlours and yard washdowns, treated if required.
- **On-Farm Storage:** Rainwater harvesting or small reservoirs for non-drinking use, like cleaning.
- **Greywater Systems:** Reuse water for cleaning pens or flushing after basic treatment.
- **SUDS & Runoff Controls:** Grassed strips, settlement ponds, and swales reduce pollution risk.
- **Boreholes:** With an abstraction licence they provide resilience and redundancy if needed.

Investments build resilience, protect compliance, and reduce long-term costs.

Your Hidden Drain

- **Leaking Drinkers:** Thousands of litres lost per year per faulty unit. Especially in pasture where they can remain unseen.
- **Over-Washing:** Unnecessary hose use in yards and sheds.
- **Cooling Systems:** Mistlers left running waste large volumes.
- **Over-Dilution of Slurry:** Excessive hose use when scraping can often be more than enough.

Proactive checks prevent waste and protect animal welfare.

Specialist Focus: Pollution & Compliance

- **Slurry & Effluent Runoff:** Mismanagement risks fines and watercourse pollution.
- **Silage Effluent:** Highly polluting; must be captured and stored.
- **NVZ Regulations:** Require strict control of nutrient runoff.
- **Wash Water Disposal:** Needs compliant handling to avoid groundwater contamination.

Mismanaged effluent isn't just wasted water it's a compliance and reputational risk.



Engage Your Team: Build a Water-Wise Culture

- **Staff Training:** On water-efficient cleaning and equipment use.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Encourage reporting of leaks and faults.
- **Community & Compliance:** Work with local water bodies and regulators.

Engaged teams make efficiency routine, not optional.

Be Prepared: Manage Water Supply Risk

- **Know Your Risks:** Drought, abstraction limits, or freezing pipes.
- **Emergency Plan:** Stored supplies or boreholes for animal drinking needs.
- **Infrastructure:** Maintain pumps, troughs, and recycling systems.
- **Agroecology:** Evaluate the lifecycle of your process and see where you can improve using the principles of an agroecosystem.

Preparation protects livestock health and farmer income.

Next Steps: Your Action Plan

- **Baseline:** Review bills and daily water use per animal.
- **Assessment:** Inspect troughs, parlours, and washdown areas.
- **Prioritise:** Address quick fixes first, then bigger investments.
- **Communicate:** Share progress with staff, buyers, and regulators.
- **Seek Expert Help:** We can provide practical assessments and implementation support.



Need Support? Let's Talk

Want support improving your farm's water resilience?
We help farmers secure supply, protect welfare, and
reduce costs, without disruption.

Email :
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