



Water leaks can cost you money!

The basics

Water leaks can be a substantial and relentless cost on a dairy farm as they are often hidden and easily ignored. The three most commonly occurring water leaks on dairy farms are worn high volume wash down jets, overflowing water troughs and dripping hot water tank overflows. Costs are clearly higher for leaks from mains water systems. Leaks can cost you twice - you will pay for any water leaking out of your supply network, but if this water finds its way to your slurry or waste water system you will also have the additional cost of its disposal. Key to finding and tracking leakage is keeping an eye on metered water usage and watching for unexplained increases. Once found, leaks are usually easy to fix.

In practice

Checking for leaks is just about being methodical. First of all it's worth looking at total farm water use and determining if this is reasonable compared with what might be expected. It's possible to put together an inventory of farm water use and work out the likely consumption of each area. If there is a disparity between calculated and actual use, it's worth looking further.



Hot water heater

CASE STUDY

Hugh James of Trefach Farm, Nevern, Pembrokeshire had a fifteen year old hot water heater for plant washing, which had provided good service in the past, but needed replacing as it was leaking.



Not only do leaks waste water. In hot water systems they waste energy too.

Just one drip per second will waste 227 litres per week and if this was hot water, it would cost £1.20 per week in electricity - that's £62 per year in total.

Mr James has since replaced the tank with a new, more energy efficient one.

He said: "Fixing the old tank was no longer a viable option. We knew that replacing the tank with a new, better insulated one would save us money in the long run. In fact we are already benefitting from savings on our energy bills."



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig; Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas



FARMING
connect
cyswllt
FFERMIO



Canolfan Datblygu Llaeth
Dairy Development Centre

DairyCo



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Overflowing water trough



Overflowing hot water heater



Leaking old tap

By isolating major legs of the internal water mains and switching off all known water use, it's possible to check if the water meter advances when there is no apparent use. This indicates a leak somewhere. Leaks from above ground equipment are easy to find and fix but underground leaks are trickier to find. Watch out for damp ground areas in dry periods, or lush vegetation in an area.

Specialist water-use recording equipment is sometimes useful as it can show up high background use of water, indicating a leak.

The bottom line

Where water is bought from the mains, every m³ saved will be worth about £1.30. Remember that a tiny drip, just once per second will waste nearly 12 m³ per year or over £15 worth of water. A significant leak can cost thousands of pounds!

For more information on how water leaks can cost you money please contact:

**Dairy Development Centre,
Gelli Aur,
Carmarthen,
Carmarthenshire, SA32 8NJ.
Telephone: 01554 748570
E-mail: ddc@colegsirgar.ac.uk**