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## The importance of keeping water troughs clean

Water troughs are important on the farm for livestock feed and water. However, the maintenance of water troughs is often neglected by farmers.

**Water is a vital nutrient and should be given at all times to livestock.** Water has many functions in the body such as *reproduction, lactation, respiration and digestion.*

## What affects water quality?

Water that contains *algae, waste, excrement and mud* discourages the livestock from drinking. **Inadequate water supply to livestock results into reduction in milk yield, feed intake, animal health and profitability.**

Animals that are fed concentrates tend to contaminate water by feed adhering to the muzzles of the animal. **Contaminants enhance the growth of microbes** in the water, which reduces the palatability of the water and **can lead to diseases.**

It is stated that no livestock should consume water containing more than 100 (median value of number of readings over time) faecal coliforms per 100 ml water. In fact, cattle will avoid drinking water that is contaminated with faeces (0.05 mg/g water) when given a choice of clean

water (Willms et al 2002).

## Design water troughs

1. Wood
2. Used Tyres
3. Storage drum
4. Metal trough
5. Plastic drums
6. Concrete trough

## Simple recommendations and requirements

**Water troughs should be placed in areas that are easy to access to the animals and be on the lookout for inspections of dirt.** Teagasc's Ned Loughlin (2016) suggested that the ideal position would be in the middle of the paddocks so that all the livestock have access to the trough (Cummins, 2016).

It is important to have ample space for animals around the troughs because they get aggressive during feed and water intake. Furthermore, there should be **enough trough space of about 450mm to allow 10% of the herd to drink simultaneously.** One should also consider having more than one trough on the farm especially if you have a lot of livestock.

## The best way to clean water troughs

It is recommended by the Agriculture and Rural Development (n.d) **that water troughs should be cleaned at least once every three days.** Water troughs that are dirty and contaminated tend to cause diseases and reduce water intake by the animal. Sick livestock should not be allowed to

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drink from one trough because diseases can easily spread to the health livestock.

Midgley (2017) **recommended that troughs should be raised off the ground to prevent wastage and animals from trampling and defecating in the troughs.** However, to avoid trampling around the troughs it is vital to put stones and to keep the area dry.

### **Employ Fish Friends**

A few amounts of **goldfish can be placed in water tanks** to help minimize algae growth and are especially useful for tanks that cannot be emptied and scrubbed easily, such as cement structures. The fish will survive in the water as long as it is clean and if they died that will give an indication to the farmer that a change of water is needed.

Water is an important resource for livestock and can also be a significant expense. The use of water and feed troughs are vital on a farm.

### **References**

<http://www.dairyweb.ca/Resources/WDD62/WDD6214.pdf>

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