

DON'T WASTE MONEY COLLECTING AND SPREADING RAINWATER

Preventing rainwater entering slurry and dirty water stores can significantly reduce storage volumes. According to Andy Walling, consultant with Promar International the failure to separate out rainwater increases the capital cost of storage and greatly adds to spreading costs.

“Analysis of data on 300 farms which took part in the Livestock North West Programme revealed that slurry on an average dairy farm contains 30% rainwater,” Mr Walling explains.

“This means the average farmer spends £1,600 on spreading rainwater on fields. This figure doubles for farmers in Nitrogen Vulnerable Zones who have to provide a minimum of five months storage for this rainwater.”

While accepting that some dilution of slurry is necessary for the slurry to be easier to spread, Mr Walling suggests significant savings can be made by reducing the amount of unnecessary rainwater getting into the slurry.

“There are a number of options to reduce the rainwater stored, and many can be done without significant investment. Dirty yard areas can be turned into clean areas by brushing and scraping after use and water from clean yard areas can be diverted using sleeping policemen and curbs. Regular maintenance of gutters and downpipes can greatly reduce volumes and steps should be taken to reduce the volume of water used to clean the parlour and this water should be diverted from the slurry store.

“We have seen some set ups where the entire cow yard drained into the slurry store. A simple re-organisation and the introduction of some sleeping policemen reduced the rainwater entering the slurry store by 80%. “

Mr Walling observes that even the more expensive options such as roofing over middens, slurry stores, silage clamps or open yards can be cost effective when compared to the potential savings.

“In many areas farmers grants are available for the implementation those measures and farmers in the North West can apply for grants through the livestock NorthWest Programme,” Mr Walling concludes