



Fact Sheet 5:

Minimising Effluent volumes

Key messages

Minimise effluent volumes using these five tips:

- Use calm stockmanship,
- Fix any water leaks,
- Keep clean stormwater out of the effluent system,
- Recycle effluent for yard and pad washing, and
- Do a water audit.

Minimising the volume of water going into the effluent system can save you time and money.

By reducing the volume of unnecessary water you will reduce:

- Time spent hosing and cleaning up,
- Electricity and pumping costs,
- Fresh water-use charges- if they apply,
- The required size of effluent storage facilities,
- Wear and tear on effluent equipment, and
- The time spent managing effluent out on the farm.

Fortunately, reducing the water volume going down the drain is relatively simple. Here are five ideas:

- 1. Calm stockmanship.** Less manure dropped on the yard means less time and water required to clean it up. Try to make sure the cows are always handled calmly and quietly in a consistent way by all farm staff. This is especially the case for the use of backing gates, which should only be used to reduce the size of the yard as it empties, not physically push cows toward the dairy. Cows are hierarchical animals; being forced up against each other, and not being able to look down and check their footing will elevate stress levels and foot injuries. Minimising stress and the length of time cows spend in the yard has a big impact on effluent generation at the dairy.
- 2. Fixing leaks.** It's easy to walk by little leaks and put off fixing them until another day, but water leaks in and around the dairy will be adding to the effluent load. Look for hoses that don't turn off completely, loose hose clips or leaking plate-coolers.



3. Keeping stormwater out. Broken guttering or missing spouting can be adding thousands of litres of water to the effluent pond. Stormwater diversion from cleaned yards can reduce water inputs, but be aware that it increases the risk of non-compliance if the diversion is not operated properly each and every time. In drier climates, it may be better to include stormwater to dilute salts in the effluent provided that you have sufficient storage capacity.

4. Recycling effluent. Recycling effluent to wash the yard area can significantly reduce the volume of fresh water going into the effluent system. Coupling this with a low labour cleaning system such as a floodwash, or self-wash backing gate can really save time and money. Be cautious about using effluent through hand held hoses or hydrants; there is currently insufficient information about the risks for the operator inhaling aerosols.

5. Doing a water audit. An audit can help to identify if your water use is higher than similar dairies. If this is the case, a water audit should also allow you to identify which areas of water use are most likely to be able to be reduced without impacting hygiene. For more information, refer to the DPI Publication *Dairy shed water: How much do you use?* at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/dairy/water-use-dairies/shed-water



References:

[View Minimizing Effluent volumes on dairy farms video](#)

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