



## Do you have enough water on your farm?

by Amanda Browne

Throughout the Burren Aran CP area having an adequate water supply is essential for high nature value and high scoring fields. Having a good, clean, reliable supply of water within a field can provide a range of benefits to water quality and biodiversity. All grazing land needs livestock drinking points and providing these adequately is an essential action that can protect water quality, improve grazing management and increase biodiversity.



SUFFICIENT WATER FOR GRAZING IS ESSENTIAL FOR HIGH SCORING SPECIES-RICH FIELDS Source: Donal Hogan

With an adequate water supply you can use grazing to manage species such as *Molinia*, for example. A flash graze of *Molinia* dominated sward in early summer, when this tough grass is more palatable, can help reduce its cover and promote species diversity.

To graze winterage fields of the Burren, or Aran islands, optimally over the winter months it is vital to have an adequate supply of water, so that the vegetation is completely grazed before Spring when flowering begins.

In the more productive parts of the CP area, it is essential that livestock are not polluting springs, streams or other water bodies. Significant degradation of water bodies can be prevented by providing additional water points which livestock can access easily thereby diverting them away from the waterbody. Troughs can be used to keep cattle away and prevent damage to springs,

streams and rivers and also encourage grazing in remote parts of winterages. Where the field is near an existing water course, pasture pumps can be used to distribute to surrounding fields, which allows livestock access to the available water without degrading the water course.

### Water related NPIs

Water trough	€290.66/trough
Rainwater catcher	€716.84/unit
Water storage tank	€798.66/tank
Solar water pump	€1852.50/unit
Pasture pump	€289.04/pump

**Water Storage tanks** are very useful for increasing supply to remote parts of the farm. Collecting rainwater from the roofs of sheds and storing in water storage tanks and then pumping to where it is needed on scored fields on the farm, is one option to address a water supply issue. Tanks can also be filled with spring water where there is a transient water supply and storage is needed for grazing when spring water levels may be low. The tanks can be gravity fed if located downslope from water source or **Solar water pumps** can be used to help distribute the water to where it is needed around the farm. To minimise their visual impact on the landscape, tanks should be located in hollows or behind stone walls.



A WELL CONCEALED STORAGE TANK, STORING WATER FROM A SPRING. Source: Amanda Browne

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On the islands and in some other parts of the CP area, **rainwater catchers** are the solution to the water supply issue and provide a supply to remote parts of the farm where there is no water infrastructure. With adequate rainwater catchers, fields can be optimally grazed during the winter and let rest during the summer allowing flowers to set seed, free from grazing and producing fantastic high scoring, species-rich grasslands.



RAINWATER CATCHER USED TO BRING WATER TO REMOTE PARTS OF ARAN FARMS. *Source: Amanda Browne*

## The Burren Winterage Festival

by *Tim O'Connell*

The Burren Winterage Festival is an annual event held in the Burren region of County Clare, Ireland, celebrating the ancient practice of winterage, where livestock are moved to graze on the limestone uplands during winter. This traditional practice has been integral to maintaining the unique landscape and biodiversity of the Burren, where the grazing helps keep the wildflower-rich grasslands open and prevents scrub encroachment.

The festival takes place in late October, on the bank holiday weekend (Friday 25th to Sunday 27th October in 2024) and includes a variety of activities like farm walks, heritage talks, webinars,

cultural events. The festival showcases local food and hosts community gatherings. The main highlight is the annual Cattle Drive, where local farmers, and visitors, accompany a herd of cattle as they are moved to the uplands for winter grazing, a tradition that has been carried on for generations.

The Burren Winterage Festival also emphasises the importance of sustainable farming practices, biodiversity conservation, and the close connection between farmers and the land. It serves as a celebration of the cultural heritage of the Burren, combining agricultural traditions with environmental stewardship.

You can learn more about the festival and see the 2024 programme at [www.burrenwinterage.com](http://www.burrenwinterage.com) to see how the festival promotes the rich heritage and sustainable agricultural practices of the Burren.

The ACRES team are proud to be part of the Burren Winterage Festival. Our team will be in attendance, with an ACRES Burren Aran info hub on Saturday and Sunday at the festival site. We look forward to seeing you there.



WINTERAGE CATTLE DRIVE. *Source: Martin Kiely*

**News:** *We have been busy meeting with advisors and farmers at our training and information meetings. We kicked off in Tubber with advisor NPI training at the end of September followed by farmer information meetings in Gort, Ballyvaughan, Lisdoonvarna and Tubber. We also held our farmer clinics on Inis Meáin, Inis Mór and Inis Oírr. It has been great catching up with farmers on the ground!*

*The NPI window for completing farm works stays open until the 31st of October. Contact your farm advisor if you want to complete an NPI plan.*

*The Burren Aran team are available to call out to your farm to plan NPIs during the current window or to help answer any questions that you may have around the ACRES scheme.*

*Get in touch or follow us*   

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