



Advice for alternative domestic supplies

During periods of very low rainfall groundwater levels can become exceptionally low. This may affect private water supplies.

A private water supply is any water supply which is not provided by a water company. Most private water supplies are situated in the more remote, rural parts of the country. The source of the supply may be a well, borehole, spring, stream, river, lake or pond. The supply may serve just one property or several properties.

Groundwater levels are fed by rainfall. Usually groundwater levels increase during winter and reduce through the summer. It can take some time for groundwater levels to increase in response to rain as water has to wet up the soil and then travel through the ground and into the spaces between rocks further underground. When there is a lack of rainfall over a long period groundwater levels can become exceptionally low and there may be impacts on private water supplies such as spring sources drying up or pumps running dry.

Actions you can take

- Regularly monitor the water levels in your well or borehole or check spring flows.
- Take water at a steady rate and at as low a rate as possible.
- Use water efficiently, for example take showers instead of baths, turn taps off when brushing teeth, wash your car with a bucket not a hose, re-use bath water. Ensure your pump is positioned below the water level. Your pump can be damaged if it is trying to pump in a dry well or borehole and can be costly to replace. Consider lowering your pump if possible.
- Be aware that as water levels lower water may be drawn into the well or borehole from greater distances, this may affect your drinking water quality. If you have concerns contact your local authority.
- Consider deepening your well or borehole to reduce the chances of it drying up.
- Consider installing water storage tanks to make your water supply more resilient when periods of dry weather occur
- Find out if there is a history of your source drying out in earlier droughts such as 1976, 1990-92, 1995-6 and 2005-6, and what happened then. This can help you understand how likely it is, and what actions have worked or been tried in the past.

Alternative supply

If water levels are very low take action to seek an alternative supply of water. Speak to neighbours to find out if they can supply you should your source of water dry up.

Find out if there is a mains water supply nearby that you could connect to. Contact your local water company for advice.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has further information about regulations surrounding [alternative water supplies in emergencies](#). The local authority may be able to require water companies to assist where water supplies fail in domestic properties under certain conditions.

With regards to keeping farm animals and horses in extreme weather, there is information available on gov.uk : <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/keeping-farm-animals-and-horses-in-extreme-weather#droughts-and-hot-weather>

Useful links

Well Drillers Association - www.welldrillers.org

Drinking Water Inspectorate - www.dwi.defra.gov.uk

Local councils -

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/D11/Directories/Localcouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/index.htm>

WaterUK and water companies - <http://www.water.org.uk/home/our-members/list-of-companies>

Water Regulatory Advisory Scheme: - <http://www.wras.co.uk/>