

DIGIFARM PROJECT: Walk over Weigh (WoW) Demonstration Site, Manilla

Background

The Digifarm Project is funded through the Australian Government Smarter Farming Partnerships which is run as part of the National Landcare Program. North West Local Land Services and the University of Sydney have teamed up to run a series of demonstration sites across the North West region to showcase the latest in agricultural technology and how it can be adopted into North West Farming Systems.

A component of the project is looking at livestock technologies, specifically in paddock systems for weighing cattle, and how the information collected can be best utilised to provide real time return on investment within local grazing systems.



IMAGE 1: Walk over Weigh (WoW) set-up around a water point at the Lockrey's in Manilla, NSW.

How does it work?

The Walk over Weigh (WoW) unit is designed as a static unit that is assembled in the paddock with cattle yard panels, generally around a water point. Cattle have their EID tag scanned while simultaneously being weighed as they walk across the scales each day, sometimes multiple times a day, giving an accurate daily weight for each animal in the mob.

The Lockrey's at Manilla was the first site in our region to trial a WoW. We took the opportunity to tie in with an existing project utilising soil moisture probes and an automated weather station that were set up in a sub-tropical pasture with a small mob of steers. The primary objective of this site was to look at the commercial application of the WoW, and to see if the three monitoring technologies could be used together to help refine grazing management and inform environmental triggers for decision making.

Within this trial, the University of Sydney is also trialing a new software package that they have developed to analyse the data output from the WoW, to produce a user friendly report that will give a snapshot of animal performance and value within a weekly time period.

With what we have learnt from this trial site we believe that the WoW unit would be ideally suited to more extensive grazing enterprises, that utilise large paddock sizes and that would not require the cattle, or WoW set-up to be moved frequently.

Pros/cons

This demonstration site highlighted some of the functionality issues that can arise with using a WoW unit in a grazing enterprise with small mob and paddock sizes.

Our team needed access to a tractor/telehandler to assist with the manual handling and set-up of the unit. This issue was compounded when the cattle needed to be moved from the paddock and the landholder could not easily move the unit with them.

During the time that the cattle were in with the unit we were able to see good correlation between the weights recorded by the WoW, and weights collected in the yards giving confidence in the data output.



IMAGE 2: Automated weather station set-up on site at Manilla, NSW.

Farmer/advisor experience using the technology

Unfortunately, due to ongoing dry conditions at the time the cattle had to be sold shortly after the unit was set-up and we were unable to proceed with the project as planned.

Despite this, and in our conversations with the Lockrey's, we were still able to make useful observations around potential commercial applications of the unit, which has informed

out site selection for the next stages of the WoW project.

Ideally, suited to trading, backgrounding and/or feedlot operations, which either

- a) do not require the cattle to be moved frequently, or;
- b) where an accurate daily weight for each animal is critical to inform decision making .

What's next?

The WoW unit has been moved into a mob of replacement heifers in a cow/calf operation near Warialda, NSW.



IMAGE 3: Soil moisture probe on site at Manilla, NSW.

Contact details

Name: Naomi Hobson, Senior Land Services Officer - Livestock

Phone: 0407 936 140

Email: naomi.hobson@lls.nsw.gov.au

© State of New South Wales through Local Land Services 2022. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing March 2022. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser. For updates go to www.lls.nsw.gov.au