

CASE STUDY



Using telemetry to ensure livestock water supply

Snapshot

Producer:
Mark Kesby (pictured)
'Tallowood', Gunnedah
28kms north of Gunnedah

Area: 400ha
Mixed farming enterprise,
beef cattle production



Background

Ensuring a reliable water supply to allow for efficient grazing of paddocks was key to Mark Kesby's livestock management strategy during the recent drought.

With a mixture of perennial tropical pastures and annual cereals grown for grazing beef cattle, Mark's property had initially been limited to a single bore with a windmill and several dams, which over time had become increasingly unreliable.

The property also has access to the Namoi River; however, as part of his long-term goal to rehabilitate the river banks on his property, Mark had fenced off the area to reduce livestock impacts.

What was involved

Mark's key objective was to ensure that reliable, good clean water was available in every paddock for his cattle. This would allow for successful grazing management and improve the overall capacity of his enterprise.

He first installed a submersible pump on his bore which pumped water to a large 40,000 gallon tank at the top of the property and this fed into a reticulated system connected to troughs in each paddock.

Initially, Mark used the submersible pump with a large air tank, float valve and pressure switch, but he felt that this wasn't as successful as he would have liked.

Looking for a better way to manage his water supply and increase labour efficiency, Mark invested in a relatively inexpensive telemetry system which helps him monitor and control his water supply remotely. The system has a

sensor at the top of the tank, which measures pressure and calculates water levels. The system has a solar panel on the top with an aerial which sends a signal to the monitor located in his home 3 km away.

The monitor allows the user to set the desired water levels and programs when to turn the pump on and off remotely, helping avoid wastage from overflowing tanks and troughs.

Benefits

During drought conditions, not having access to water can be a determining factor in de-stocking cattle earlier than necessary. Feed may still be available in the paddock, but there is no water supply for livestock, and the producer is forced to reduce stock numbers. However, with water available in every paddock, stock can be moved anywhere on the property based on the feed available.

Having more control over where livestock can graze in dry times is crucial to good pasture management. It helps reduce overgrazing and allows paddocks to be rested and most importantly retain groundcover.

The telemetry system is easy to use and simple to set up. The technology is cost-effective and time-saving, cutting down on time spent driving around the property checking on water tanks and troughs.

The system helps reduce water wastage from overflowing and unchecked troughs. It allows a quick response time to any water issues, such as losing water quickly, by sending an alert.

Good clean water is beneficial for livestock health, particularly in dry times when dams can become contaminated and cause cattle to become bogged.

Summary

Ensuring that a reliable supply of water is available is essential for good livestock management during dry times. Having water supplied to every paddock helps reduce the pressure on pastures by allowing the producer to control where and when to graze a paddock.

Using telemetry technology to monitor water points improves efficiency, makes the most of available water resources, and significantly reduces wastage. It is easy to use, cost-effective and less labour intensive, helping improve a farming enterprise's production.

Further information

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Key learning and advice

Getting advice or the engaging the services of a professional to help design a water reticulation system would be recommended to ensure the correct materials and equipment (such as pipe size and pressure rating) are used.

Mark felt that the equipment's initial purchase amount was 'paid back' within a very short time. It was easy to use, time-saving and allowed him to have peace of mind about his livestock water supply.



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