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Infosheet

How to Calculate Water Storage Needs for Livestock

We have compiled the information in this article to help you estimate your water storage needs for stock farms. This cannot replace real world experience in a particular location and place, so should be taken into consideration as best estimate.

Source: Sheep Grazing Near Greens Lake, Takver

Water Requirements for Stock

The water consumption figures quoted below have a wide range depending upon the stock breed. When planning water supply requirements, you should also allow for evaporation losses and consumption by native animals, if applicable.

Stock	Type	Daily Water Consumption (L) (per head unless otherwise stated)
Cattle	Lactating cows (grassland)	40–100
	Lactating cows (saltbush)	70–140
	Young stock	25–50
	Dry stock (400 kg)	35–80
Sheep	Weaners	2–4
	Adult (grassland)	2–6
	Adult (saltbush)	4–12
	Ewes with lambs	4–10

Horses	Adult horses	40–50
	Young horses	20–40
	Lactating horses	80–150
Pigs	Lactating sow	24–45
	Dry sow and boar	12–15
	Finisher	9–12
	Grower	5–7
	Weaners	3–5
Chickens	Layer pullet (4–18 weeks)	100–200 per 1000 birds
	Laying hens (50–90% production)	220–270 per 1000 birds
	Broilers (1–2 weeks)	65–120 per 1000 birds
	Broilers (3–4 weeks)	180–245 per 1000 birds
	Broilers (5–8 weeks)	290–370 per 1000 birds

Water consumption figures may vary due to seasonal conditions, water and feed quality, sex, age and breed of stock. For example:

- British breed sheep require about 20 per cent more water than Merino sheep under hot conditions.
- Sheep can also drink 40% more during summer than winter.
- In extreme temperatures sheep and cattle can consume up to 80% more water.
- Pregnant and lactating animals can need up to double their normal water intake.
- Animals that are old also have a higher water requirement compared with younger stock due to their greater mass and size.

Keep in mind the pasture and dietary intake of your stock has a large influence on their water requirements. If healthy green pastures can be provided, then such can meet most of your stock water needs. Sheep under such conditions may not even need to drink for many weeks.

Livestock Tolerance to Water Salinity

The desirable maximum concentration of salt in your water for healthy animal growth is:

- 2,000 mg/L – poultry
- 2,500 mg/L – dairy cattle
- 4,000 mg/L – beef cattle, horses and pigs
- 5,000 mg/L – sheep.

(Source: Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality, 2000.)

The figures provided within this article are estimates based upon different Australian sources. For accurate estimates we recommend seeking out real life figures that closely match your own property, environmental conditions and your particular breeds.

With an accurate picture of your annual water requirements you are in a position to better understand the storage and troughs necessary. You can also negotiate better pricing with your supplier when bulk ordering tanks or ordering full truck loads.

Clark Tanks work closely with many farmers to supply reliable water and feed storage solutions. Why not contact us today. We understand the needs of the rural community and can provide you with high quality farming products you can count on.
