



Calculating Livestock Water Requirements for Your Farm

If you work a farm with livestock, planning for your necessary stock water is just as important as feed supplies. Ensuring your stock has adequate water at all times, especially during the hot Australian summer when livestock require more water, is evidently important.

To correctly plan requires knowing your properties' water sources, how much water you need for your livestock month-to-month, and then ensuring the correct amount of water is available on your property at all times. To help, this article will look at some water estimates of common livestock found on Australian farms.

Livestock Water Drinking Requirements

It is important to keep in mind that your feed type and quality, livestock breed, sex and age, weather conditions, available shelter and water quality can all affect water consumption. Nonetheless, some average figures can be estimated based upon drink (litres) per head.

Please note: During summer cattle, sheep and horse water consumption will be about 40% more than winter, on extremely hot days as much as 80% more water. Water consumption can be reduced by providing shaded areas, it is also important to shelter water sources as livestock avoid warm water.

Cattle Daily Water Requirements

Cattle type	Daily requirements (L/head)
Lactating cow on grassland	40-100
Lactating cow on saltbush	70-140
Young stock	25-50
Dry stock (400kg)	35-80

Sheep Daily Water Requirements

Sheep type	Daily requirements (L/head)
Adult dry sheep on grassland	2-6
Adult dry sheep on saltbush	4-12
Ewes with lambs	4-10
Weaners	2-4

Horse Daily Water Requirements

Horse type	Daily requirements (L/head)
Lactating horses	80–150
Young horses	20–40
Horses	40–50

Poultry Daily Water Requirements

Chickens do not really consume much water on their own, but if you farm them, then you will likely have thousands. Poultry water requirements based upon sex and the production of laying hens.

Production Stage	Age/Rate of Production	Daily requirements (L/1000 birds at 21°C)
Layer pullet	4 weeks	100
	12 weeks	160
	18 weeks	200
Laying hens	50% production	220
	90% production	270

If you farm mixed sex birds, then daily water consumption for broilers at 20°C based upon age are as follows:

Age (weeks)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
L/1000 birds (mixed sex)	65	120	180	245	290	330	355	370

Obviously, if temperatures are hotter than birds will consume more water, about 40% more at temperatures 32°C and above. Water intake for birds is generally about 1.5–2 times the amount of feed intake.

If you need to water stock, then rainwater is an invaluable high-quality water source to harvest. Water tanks are a great way to maintain the highest quality of water and protect against evaporation.

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www.nationalpolyindustries.com.au

BUNDABERG (QLD)

89 Childers Road
Bundaberg QLD 4670

MAITLAND (NSW)

1st Floor, 350 High Street
Maitland NSW 2320

NATIONAL OFFICE

20 Bridge Street
Pymble NSW 2073