



On Farm Connectivity Case Study:

Tank monitoring technology already “paid for itself” on Northern Territory station

Installing remote water monitoring technology on Angus and Kimberley McKay’s extensive Northern Territory holdings has already “paid for itself,” cutting the time and labour needed for dedicated bore runs across their 2.1 million acres south of Alice Springs.

Running Adnanta Pastoral Company, an organic rangeland cattle enterprise comprising up to 14,000 head, the couple decided to invest in 20 Agbot liquid monitors to remotely check their tank water levels given their reliance on bores. With each tank individually monitored via satellite connectivity, Angus says they have set their water levels to receive notification if any tank drops below this point.

Praising the Federal Government’s On Farm Connectivity Program as the catalyst to invest in this much-needed technology, Angus says, “we probably wouldn’t have done it if it wasn’t for the grant,” citing the impact of adverse seasonal conditions on their business.

The grant, which provides a 50 per cent rebate on the cost of the sensor technology, was utilised by the McKay’s on two occasions, with the couple purchasing and installing their first 10 Agbot monitors before following it up with another 10 in recent weeks.

“We put the first ones in a couple of months ago when the grant first came out,” Angus says. “And we thought this is great, we will get another 10 more, which we again did under the grant.”

With plans to “keep expanding the system with Agbot’s” to around 50 units, Angus says the technology has proven “simpler and more affordable” than some older technology they had previously adopted through another provider.

“We knew from previous experience with the older technology that the whole principle was sound,” he says.

Angus says not only does the tank monitoring system “save us a lot of driving each week,” it also “gives us some peace of mind going to sleep at night knowing that the bores are still pumping.

“These units will save us thousands of kilometres per week,” he explains. “In the heat of summer we do two rounds of bore water points a week and there are always ones in between that you go back and double check.

“These units will tell us if the bores are still pumping and will take out that third bore run during the week.

“It’s a huge, huge time saver.”

Estimating a saving of \$300 per week in terms of fuel costs and labour, Angus estimates it has saved them “an extra man, for a whole extra day a week with these devices”.

Citing the emergency messaging system and interactive app as a timely method to inform them if the tank has dropped below a certain point.

“You can run straight out there rather than waiting two or three days to discover it,” he says. “You know it’s an issue before it becomes a major issue.”

Despite there being very little connectivity across the station, with a small cell Telstra tower providing coverage in the vicinity of the homestead, Angus says this is overcome with Agbot running via satellite connectivity.

“Around 90 per cent of the property has no mobile coverage. So everything has to be done through satellite,” he says.

This has seen the McKay’s adopt ZOLEO satellite communicators as a way for their staff to remain connected through text messages.

“We can send messages back and forth to the homestead using that same type of satellite technology,” he says.

Encouraging other farmers to take up the On Farm Connectivity Program to adopt connectivity solutions in their farm enterprises, Angus says the grant helps the technology pay for itself more quickly.

“There have been two instances now where we have had the alarm go off and there has been an issue, and we have been able to go and fix it before the cattle have run out of water.

“So it has probably paid for itself already.”