

Five ways to use Excel to streamline your farm record keeping and decision making



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There is an overabundance of different options for storing farm records and analysing data. They range from carefully kept historical diaries to notes on the back of an envelope right through to top-of-the-line app based ag tech solutions.

Excel spreadsheets can be used to simply record and analyse much of the information you have on hand. Data can also be extracted from other programs and analysed or enhanced in excel. The best thing is you can completely customise the layout for what you want to focus on and present the information in a way that makes sense to you and others who need to use it.

Five spreadsheets you might want to develop for your livestock business?

1. Asset Register

A list of assets can contain equipment names, date of manufacture, VIN and registration details. Annually updating values on equipment can help inform decisions around replacement and insurance. Storing filter and replacement part numbers and service intervals or dates can help with maintenance activities.

2. Paddock List

A simple list of paddocks can be used to store information that does not change, like paddock area, arable area and land capacity and can be updated when needed to record information like grazing records, crop types and production achievements.

3. Calendar of Operations

A calendar of operations can be used to plan out the essential activities for the year, including holidays! Calendars help communication and makes sure what needs to get done, gets done. As well as including day to day activities, also include prompt dates for booking

contractors, talking to agents, stud stock pre purchase reviews and ordering inputs.

For a livestock business you may separate tasks by livestock type and include a section for pasture related tasks, machinery maintenance, general farm maintenance, administration, finance and management. Colour can be used to allocate certain tasks to different family business members.

4. Budget and actual gross margins

Gross margin information is a great way to determining ways to improve profitability. Gross margins can be developed on a per head level and then reviewed against actual outcomes. Sometimes it's best to look at the bigger picture when budgeting for livestock costs. While excel can help with costing out drench and vaccination by the millilitre and ear tags individually, allocating a per head total cost can make the task easier. Some online tools to help get you started with this task.

Grains Research and Development Corporation

https://grdc.com.au/resources-and-publications/all-publications/publications/2022/farm-gross-margin-and-enterprise-planning-guide?utm_medium=short_url&utm_content=2022%20Farm%20Gross%20Margin%20and%20Enterprise%20Planning%20Guide&utm_source=website&utm_term=South

Meat and Livestock Australia

<https://www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/tools-calculators/Cost-of-production/>

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5. Livestock performance data

Excel is a great tool for analysis as well as record keeping. You may want to use excel to store annual information on scanning results, survival percentages, marking rates or weight gain. Once the data has been recorded; graphs, tables, ratios and averages can all be generated with ease. This is fantastic information to have readily on hand for reporting to the bank, generating budgets as well as goal setting and review.

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