How to calculate whole farm stocking rate

Whole farm stocking rate refers to the total number of livestock managed over the farm area. Stocking rate is an important concept in livestock businesses because farm financial assessment and analysis shows that feed utilisation is an important driver of profitability in livestock businesses. Stocking rate is one of the drivers of feed utilisation so its important to understand how to calculate it for your farm business.

The calculation of whole farm stocking rate by month is useful as it provides an assessment of the feed demand when used with information about livestock intake and wastage.

Livestock systems differ in the timing and rate of reproduction, the timing of sales of different livestock classes and the proportion of different livestock classes carried. These differences in system lead to differences in stocking rate. The stocking rate tool provides the ability to run different livestock systems to demonstrate the change in the shape of the feed demand curve.

Stocking rate is typically measured in dry sheep equivalents. A dry sheep equivalent represents the amount of feed required by a two year old 45 kilogram castrated male merino sheep to maintain its weight. This equates to 7.6 Megajoules of metabolizable energy per day.

The dry sheep equivalent is used as a standard unit as it allows for comparison of feed requirements between different livestock types and between different classes of livestock depending on the stage of reproduction.

What you will need to use this tool.
1. Livestock numbers by class of livestock for the period assessed.
2. The area of land categorised by feed source
3. An estimate of the number of weeks that each feed source was available for grazing.
4. The annual rainfall for the period assessed.

What are the outputs of the tool?
1. The total number of DSE managed by month
2. The mid winter and average annual stocking rate
3. A whole farm stocking rate graph