

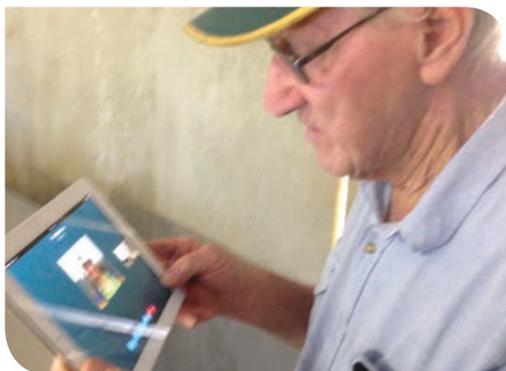


Industry project for smarter energy use

Case Study: Pat McDonald, Tygalah, NSW

Pat McDonalds farm is situated on the fertile river flats country between the Tweed and Rous Rivers at Tygalah near Murwillumbah in Northern NSW. Pat along with his daughter Jennifer milk 150 Jersey cows all year round off a 50ha platform. Even at the age of 80, Pat is always looking at new ways to improve his practices to increase efficiency and productivity.

Pat was interested in investigating ways to reduce his energy use and signed up for an energy assessment with Dairy Australia. Along with regional NRM facilitator Steve Lacey, Pat participated in an innovative trial which delivered the on farm energy assessment via a “Skype” video call on a tablet computer. On the other end was energy assessor Chris Harding from NBA Consulting.



Pat McDonald discussing the assessment process with Chris Harding via the Skype application.

The assessment took a little over two and a half hours with Pat showing Chris all the pieces of machinery required to gather the data to complete the assessment via the video camera on the tablet. A key benefit of doing the assessment this way was the data collected could then be instantly added to the electronic energy assessment tool to reconcile energy use against the farms power bill by Chris. In a traditional on farm assessment, this process is normally done after the farm visit, back in the office. During the assessment all areas of the dairy were visited and data collected for water pumping, hot water temperatures & volumes, machine running times and milk cooling. The complete assessment via Skype used 1.2Gb of data during the transfer and the internet access and speed was 3 out of 5 bars on a 3G network from Pat’s farm.

Chris said “I was surprised at how good the picture and audio quality at my end was with Skype. The camera truly was my eyes and ears at the dairy. I think for those farmers who are comfortable with using the technology, collecting the data in this way for a dairy energy assessment is a realistic and relatively easy alternative to an on farm visit”.

When asked about doing the assessment via “Skype” Mr McDonald replied. “I thought it was very good way of doing the assessment. It was like being on the phone but with the assessor seeing what I am looking at. I think many farmers can do the assessment this way and that’s coming from someone my age!”

Dairy Australia is looking at how skype assessments can be used to reach farmers in more remote areas and to overcome some of the logistical challenges of getting assessors on farm across Australia.

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