

OUR IMPACT 2024

A series of **case studies** that capture the unique impact of the Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub



SOUTHERN NSW
Innovation Hub

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE,
LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES

Supporting NSW graziers to save their soils and maintain livestock production

The Saving Our Soils During Drought project, delivered by Southern NSW Innovation Hub partner NSW Local Land Services (LLS), worked with NSW livestock producers to implement the effective use of stock confinement feeding areas to keep livestock in good condition and maintain groundcover during dry times.

BACKGROUND

During droughts, soils that lose groundcover become highly susceptible to wind and water erosion, leading to significant land degradation. Stock confinement feeding areas are recognised as an excellent management tool for this challenge delivering benefits to livestock and a farm's natural resources, particularly soils. The Saving Our Soils During Drought project increased adoption of this tool among NSW graziers through hands-on demonstrations of how stock confinement feeding areas work and supporting people to implement them.

Southern NSW Innovation Hub played an integral role in the project receiving funding through the Future Drought Fund by bringing together partners with the right resources, skills and networks to effectively engage sheep and cattle producers and increase on-farm adoption. This included NSW LLS as the project lead, with collaboration from five Farming Systems Groups and a group of soil scientists.

Both through dry times and better times, we [now] use confinement feeding for management of pasture, maintaining ground cover and not getting erosion and topsoil loss... and managing our cattle to be able to keep the condition score that we want.

BEN RAYNOLDS
BREAKFAST CREEK STATION | BOOROWA

ON-FARM CHANGE

The Saving Our Soils During Drought project has led to widespread understanding among graziers in NSW that stock confinement feeding areas are an effective means of keeping livestock well fed and managed, while simultaneously maintaining ground cover and protecting soil health.

Talking about a stock confinement feeding area built recently on his property "Tallawangra" near Mudgee, grazier Adam Mort said, "I can see that it's going to give us options here when times get dry... Now I can look after country, you know, maybe sell animals that are in good condition in a drought where normally I would never have animals ...in good enough condition to sell."

Adrian Sykes from "Glendalyn" at Binalong has had a stock confinement feeding area in place for around 15 years and he said, "The benefits of the drought lot obviously are getting stock off your paddocks and you managing your ground cover... your soils and pastures much better."

"[A stock confinement feeding area] simplifies your decision-making process around your stocking rate during drought because you don't have the complication of knocking your property around. You're making decisions based on your financial position and what your plan is – what you're trying to achieve during that drought, without the worry of damaging your property and losing topsoil."

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Holbrook Landcare Network's Making Stock Management Areas Manageable workshop June 2023

PROJECT OUTPUTS

Key outputs from the project that contributed to increasing the adoption of stock confinement areas included

- **Fifteen demonstration sites established across Southern NSW using existing stock confinement feeding areas to showcase the benefits**
- **Six landholder case studies showcased the successful implementation of stock confinement feeding areas and examples of the benefits of in terms of drought resilience**
- **A comprehensive confinement feeding manual for landholders and extension officers was developed and is still one of the most popular Hub and NSW LLS resources**
- **Nineteen workshops and 18 demonstration site visits provided hands-on training and facilitated knowledge exchange**
- **Five models for confinement feeding were developed tailored to different landscapes and illustrating its positive impacts on pasture resilience and persistence**

One livestock producer from Central West NSW, after attending an on-farm workshop commented, **“We will be moving away from paddock feeding in dry times. The day has given me the confidence to make the right decision when needed.”** Another said, “It was great to see the four different confinement styles and budgets, each had great ideas. It is useful to see what we may adopt moving forward.”

NSW LLS & THE HUB WORKING TOGETHER

Talking about how NSW LLS and Southern NSW Innovation Hub work together effectively NSW LLS’ Dale Kirby described the Hub as **“an aggregator and consolidator of diverse information and ideas into a central location”** to focus on customer needs for drought and innovation.

Dale believes that ultimately the Hub’s value lies in an “unbiased approach to engaging with all partners to provide a customer-centric view of drought preparedness, which benefits producers and the entire value chain in terms of adoption and improved business resilience.”

Collaboration between NSW LLS and Southern NSW Innovation Hub on this project made it possible for NSW graziers to better understand the benefits of stock management areas and to implement this type of system on their farms.

Dale said, “The Saving our Soils During Drought project had a real adoption focus and led to a high level of producer uptake thanks to demonstrating the benefits of a confinement feeding area and how to implement them.

“The resources produced were also key to the project’s impact. This included the explanation videos and producer case studies on YouTube, and importantly the practical guide to confinement feeding sheep and cattle in NSW.”

“The technical team from LLS who helped deliver the project have now been asked to deliver training in Tasmania and it’s certainly generated interest beyond the Hub’s Southern NSW footprint.”

The Saving Our Soils During Drought project was delivered by NSW Local Land Services (LLS) with collaborating partners including Holbrook Landcare, Farmlink, Riverine Plains, Central West Farming Systems, Irrigation Farmers Network, and The Soil Knowledge Network. It was a \$1 million project funded by the Future Drought Fund’s Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes program through Southern NSW Innovation Hub.



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Future
Drought
Fund



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