

# Water Monitoring for Livestock

## Water monitoring protects livestock in a tough season



For sheep producers Alicia Cooper and Tim Chirgwin, remote water monitoring proved to be more than a time-saver—it became a vital tool in a tough season where managing every drop mattered. They both took part in the Department of Primary Industries and Regions' (PIRSA) Kangaroo Island Demonstration Program to test practical technologies aimed at lifting productivity and resilience.

### “It’s too valuable not to keep”



Alicia Cooper checking tank levels on her phone

#### ALICIA COOPER

TECHNOLOGY: **Farmbot water monitoring**

LOCATION: **Parndana**

PROPERTY SIZE: **1200 hectares**

ENTERPRISES: **Merino sheep**

Alicia Cooper installed a Farmbot tank sensor nearly two years ago to keep a closer eye on her sheep water supply. The system, which monitors tank levels and alerts Alicia to drops or leaks, has

proven invaluable during the recent drought conditions.

“In 2025 we ran out of dam water and had to rely on expensive mains water,” Alicia explains.

“Given the cost of mains water, we don’t want to be wasting any. That’s why the Farmbot sensor is so useful. We are able to find leaks and fix them straight away, saving us water and money.”

The sensor itself is simple to set up, Alicia says.

“You drop it into the tank, enter the tank size in the web portal, and it runs off a solar panel,” she says.

“Honestly, it’s easier than putting together IKEA furniture. My 72-year-old dad could have installed it.”

The sensor is currently installed on a tank used during confinement feeding and Alicia plans to keep it in place year-round.

“The same tank diverts water to other paddocks when we’re not confinement feeding so it’s important data year-round.

“If I didn’t have that set-up and I wanted to move it to another tank further from the house, it’s easy to do and it would save me a lot of driving.”

Alicia has also connected a rain gauge to the system, with additional ports available for other monitoring equipment.

“We access the data on a PC or phone through a browser, and Farmbot are working on an app to make it even easier. It’s really user-friendly,” she says.

For Alicia, the benefits go beyond water savings.

“We used to check water constantly, sometimes hourly. Now I can go on holiday and still know my sheep have water.

“It gives me peace of mind. One day without water in the summer heat here on KI can ruin a mob.”

While the current model monitors tank levels, Alicia is eyeing an upgrade.

“If I had the time and money, I’d definitely go for the version that can control pumps and valves remotely. That’s the next step for me.”

## “It’s got me thinking differently about technology”



### Tim Chirgwin

**TECHNOLOGY:** Farmbot  
water monitoring

**LOCATION:** Western Cove

**PROPERTY SIZE:** 500 hectares

**ENTERPRISES:** Suffolk and  
crossbred sheep

Tim Chirgwin installed a Farmbot tank level monitor two years ago after seeing the value in reducing manual checks.

“I’ve always been interested in agtech, but mainly if it makes life easier,” Tim says. “The way I used to monitor water worked, but it needed a lot more input from me. I wanted something simpler.”

Like all livestock producers, access to water is critical for Tim.

“Our dam ran dry in 2025 and even when it’s full, I’ve got long pipe runs, solar pumps and plenty of things that can go wrong like someone digging through a pipe or just not enough sun to power the solar pumps.

“Farmbot makes it clear if something goes wrong, fast.”

One particular example of the value of his monitoring system stands out to Tim.

“It was Christmas Day and we were heading off to lunch,” he recalls.

“I got an alert from the Farmbot to say the tank was dropping fast. We drove four kilometres up the line and found the rams had bumped the tap.



“They’d had themselves a good drink and emptied the tank. Without the alert, the rest of the sheep would have gone without water on a 40-degree day.”

Previously, Tim had installed a manual float he could see from the gate, but that still meant a 10km round trip just to check.

“Now, I only get a notification if something’s wrong,” he says.

“I’ve set the sensor up with thresholds. If the water drops quickly or the level gets too low, I get a message. It’s hassle-free.”

Like Alicia, Tim found the setup process easy and support excellent.

“I had a small question and rang Farmbot. They adjusted the system remotely and it worked faultlessly after that,” he says.

Even though Tim now uses mains water in some paddocks, the Farmbot still has a place.

“It’s made me think about other uses,” he says.

“In the future, I might swap to a flowmeter to detect small leaks, which can get expensive over time.

“The tank monitor has given me the confidence to start thinking differently about agtech.”

Tim says he is also considering the system’s wider potential.

“Farmbot can connect to trough sensors, grain silos and even feed bins in a feedlot situation. Before, I’d just do things the hard way because that’s how we always did it, but this has shown me that technology really can make life easier and save money.”

### Supporting smarter, safer farming



For producers like Alicia and Tim, water monitoring technology has helped them avoid major issues, reduce stress and gain time back from daily checks.

“We’ll definitely be keeping it,” Alicia says.

“It’s too valuable not to.”

### About the program

The KI AgTech Demonstration Program, funded by the Australian Government Regional Recovery Partnerships program, allowed KI primary producers to road test technologies free of charge on-farm and share their experiences with other producers on the use and benefits of the technologies.

**More information:** [www.pir.sa.gov.au](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au)