

# Farmer's versatile, user-friendly RDS Weighlog in use year-round



## Dairy farmers Stuart and Sara Russell bought their first RDS weigh scales for their tractor in 2009.

That model was an RDS Weighlog 100 and it outlasted three different tractors. So, when they moved to a telehandler five years ago, it was a natural progression to update to a Weighlog Alpha 10.

Stuart and Sara's 287-ha dairy operation, Ngatimaru Farm is south of Ashburton. They milk 750 cows and run their own young stock.

They bought their first Weighlog because they were spreading their own fertiliser and wanted accurate rates, but its uses go well beyond just fertiliser.

"We can calibrate it to all our gear and that flows through to feeding silage. We use it all year around," Stuart says.

"We feed both balage and bulk silage. When we collect individual rounds, we track and tally all bale weights and get a DM test so we know very accurately how much feed is on hand."

An unexpected advantage was being able to compare bales made by different contractors. Variability per bale was up to 250 kg. When paying per bale this makes a big difference in the contractor's bill, and becomes a good reason to shop around for a more efficient contractor.

Bulk silage is maize and it is all bought in over the weighbridge and then measured and recorded again as it is fed out.

"Last year we brought in 227 tonnes of maize and fed out 225 tonnes, and that's not to say we didn't miss a few button pushes..."

Stuart says the Weighlog Alpha 10 is better than the older model at feed targets. He enters the desired amount of silage for a particular mob and the Weighlog screen shows that figure, plus the running total. It goes red and sounds an alarm when the target is reached. With this feature alone Weighlog Alpha 10 paid for itself in the first year.

"We were miles over-feeding and wasting quite a bit, and then there is getting fertiliser accurate."

In the 14 years he has used Weighlog scales, Stuart has never needed parts, other than a new screen.

Upgrades on the Weighlog Alpha 10 model include a touchscreen, the ability to use it with more implements, and the ability to record everything and save that information to a memory stick or SD card. Weighlog Alpha 10 stores data for up to 30 products and 30 customers.

When they got the Weighlog Alpha 10 they lined up all their implements – bucket, forks, soft hands – then put them on one-by-one, zeroed the weight and saved it. They then weighed a known weight and calibrated to that.

"From then on it doesn't matter what implement we use, we just change it on screen and we are good to go."

The scales will work whilst the loader arm is moving, but it is more accurate when stationary.

"We lift it, wait two seconds for the beep, then carry on. On a smooth surface you could easily weigh the load as you are driving, but on rough terrain the front axle goes up and down and it is better to wait for it to lock in on a weight," Stuart says.

On the telehandler, the scales are accurate when the boom is fully retracted and the implement is at roughly the same angle as when calibrated.

They could download the data from the Weighlog Alpha 10, but they tend to delete it after it has served its purpose. For example, when a load of fertiliser is tipped off they can weigh it as they load it into the spreader. If they are certain they got what was ordered, the data is no longer needed.

"It is mainly insurance. We once discovered we were 8 tonnes short on a unit load. It was RPR so an expensive mix. It was a genuine mistake by the fertiliser company, but without Weighlog we would never have known. We would have chucked it in the spreader, ran out and thought it we had done something wrong."

Stuart says the Weighlog is easy to use. "It's the simplicity. Everything is on the touchscreen and visual. The implements have actual images of buckets and grabs. It is very user-friendly."

RDS Systems is based in Ashburton and their service has been excellent, he says.

"Lyn Rees has been brilliant. The RDS team installed Weighlog in our telehandler and made a very tidy job. It worked a treat. They have come out with scales and checked the calibrations and there has been very good back-up service."