

Media Release

Remote-controlled farm gate opens to let in new technology

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Visitors to the "Ag-Quip" agricultural field days near Gunnedah this week will be able to open a farm gate near Walcha by sending it a signal over the Internet. They will also be able to use the Internet to watch the faraway gate as it opens to let the cattle through.



The presentation at "Ag-Quip" is part of a project designed to demonstrate the potential of modern telemetry techniques in livestock farming. The Institute for Rural Futures (IRF) at The University of New England has been collaborating on the project for the past 12 months with Telstra Country Wide and the Telstra Research Laboratories in Melbourne.

Brendan Doyle, the Assistant Director of IRF, said the Internet connection made it possible for farmers to control and monitor aspects of livestock movement and maintenance on their properties from virtually anywhere in the world. In Australia, the system could also be controlled through Telstra's CDMA mobile phone network, he said. "Farmers can use the system for security surveillance as well as for stock monitoring," Mr Doyle explained. "The system sends back a text message via mobile phone if anyone goes through the gate."

"It will be particularly useful for farmers working several properties at once, and for those who also have a job in town," he said. "It will save them travel time, as well as fuel costs and other expenses. Also, in more intensive livestock systems where you're moving stock on a daily basis, it will provide an opportunity to control some of those movements remotely.

"It has many more potential uses: for example, we're looking now at the feasibility of remote-controlled weighing devices for individual animals. And once the system is established on a property, it's easily expandable to include new applications."

This is the first trial of its kind in NSW; it will be on show at the Telstra Country Wide site at "Ag-Quip". Mr Doyle emphasised that, because of Telstra's CDMA network, the system was applicable (and transferable) to many parts of the country.

Elise Munsie, the General Manager (New England North West) of Telstra Country Wide, said: "We're now at a pivotal point. This is opening up a whole host of applications for new technology for our farming community."

The photograph displayed here shows (from left) IRF Project Officer Chris Weber, IRF Assistant Director Brendan Doyle, and Telstra Events Manager (North West NSW) Justin Contegiacomo.