

The importance of body weight in livestock animals

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Weight is the most revealing and important factor in selection and production as well as animal performance as a whole (Raji et al., 2008). Live weight is used for body mass because it varies continuously *with feeding, watering, dropping, urinating, breathing* and etc.

Below are some of the factors as to why weight is crucial in animals:

- Weight is very **effective in assessing the reproductive efficiency and growth performance** in animals.
- It can be used in **determining the health status of an animal when measured in relation to its age**. *For example: an animal loss weight is an indication of poor health and, on the contrary, gaining it shows that the animal is in good health.*
- In addition, **weight can also be used in measuring the correct dose of therapeutic pharmaceutical to treat animal diseases**, to avoid the risk of underdosing or overdosing.
- Weight can be used to **determine the correct amount of feed** an animal can get, to avoid underfeeding or overfeeding.
- It also allows you to determine the possible values of the live animal in relation to the market price.
- Weighing also helps in determining the weaning time of an animal. As well as to predict the growth of the calves by analysing the captured data and studying the performance graph.

Literature also state that weighing of animal is very vital as it assists in making decisions for breeding, feeding and veterinary

service provision under farmers' settings.

Different methods used to measure body weight

The most common methods to measure body weight are:

1. The electronic scale.
2. The use of weight band.
3. Height, width and heart girth.

1. Electronic scale

Electronic scales are the most commonly used method to determine the weight of animal, which has been used across the world on different animals and species. However, rural areas are mostly subjected with people who earn low income and the cost of scales are high. Hence, most farmers are not having infrastructures such as electricity for the use of electronic scale.

2. Weight band

Thus, there is an alternative method that can be used weight band (tools that is used to estimate live weights of animal). **It's a tape/belt that is placed around the body parts of an animal that measures and converts lengths (cm) to kilograms (kg)**. Weight bands have been used on different animal species namely: *sheep, goat, beef and dairy cattle*.

3. Height, width and heart girth.

Height, width and heart girth are often used to predict live weight in cattle. **The heart girth tape helps to empower the farmers with knowledge about the value of their animals which then improves trade, their economic situation and livestock improvement.** In addition, farmers with better knowledge about the weight of their animals can improve their management practices which in turn can improve the welfare and production of cattle.

Furthermore Bhadula et al. (1979) reported that the best method of weighing animals without scales is to regress body weight on certain body characteristics which can be readily measured. **Body weight and linear measurements such as heart girth, body length and height at wither have been used in predicting carcass composition in goats** (Kahlodi, 2014).

Weight is crucial for all farmers to avoid the loss of money, especially for commercial farmers. The use of body measurement is more practical, faster, easier and cheaper especially for those farmers that have access to low capital, with little education and minimum supervision.

References

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