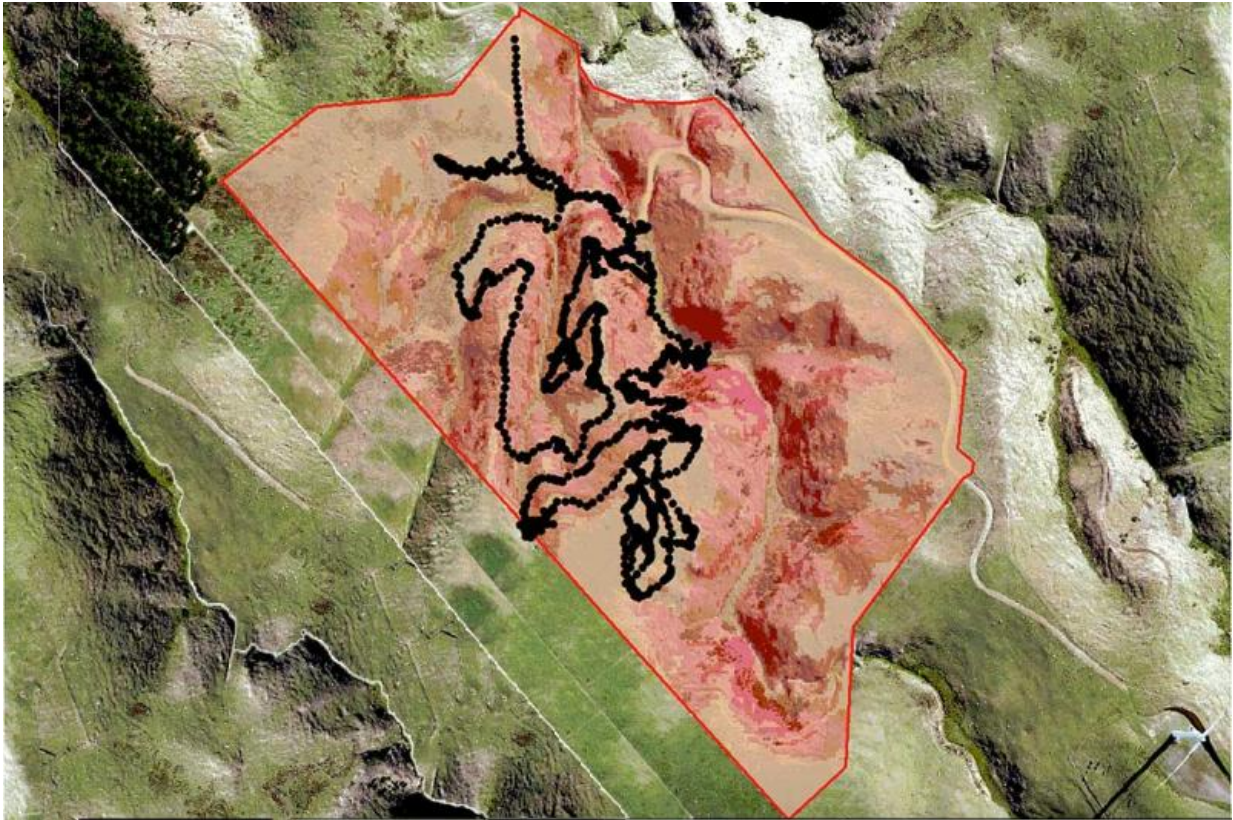


Cow GPS aids sustainable grazing research

August 26 2015



A still image from a timelapse of a single beef cow grazing on hill country.

Scientists from Massey University have confirmed what farmers have known for years –cows do not like to walk uphill.

The research is part of an ongoing project funded by Beef + Lamb New Zealand to investigate more sustainable farming practices for managing

[beef cows](#) on [hill](#) country and around waterways.

Dr Rebecca Hickson, Dr Ina Draganova and Professor Steve Morris monitored Angus, Angus cross Friesian and Angus cross Jersey cows over two consecutive winters at Massey University's Tuapaka farm (part of the Massey University Agricultural Experiment Station) to get baseline measures of how the beef cows used the 8 to 12 ha paddocks.

The research found that, even in extensive hill country paddocks, cows avoided walking uphill. Of the 3 kilometres they walked each day, less than 300 metres was uphill. Instead the cows followed the contours of the hills and concentrated their grazing on the flatter areas. The movement of the cows was largely unaffected by cold, wet weather.

Despite this energy-saving pattern of movement, maintenance requirements of the cows increased by about 15 per cent to meet their energy needs for walking. This reinforced existing estimates of feed requirements used for beef cows grazing in hill country.

The team say this research confirms what farmers already know about feed requirements and [grazing](#) habits but gives them a baseline measure to work with. From here, the researchers will be manipulating where [cows](#) are fed supplements to see if this encourages them to use different areas of the pasture.

Provided by Massey University

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