



The Wisconsin Brand



Rice Lake Weighing Systems' livestock scales are proudly manufactured in the heart of America's dairyland.

By Caleb Olson, editor

Every livestock scale has a story. From the raw materials used in its construction to the people involved in its manufacture, the wide variety of elements involved in the scale's formation ultimately define its identity. At Rice Lake Weighing Systems, every livestock scale is made tough by Wisconsin hands and a finely tuned production system to ensure consistent quality.

When Rice Lake acquired the MAS-M mobile livestock scale in 2011 from a Canadian manufacturer, the framework of an excellent weighing system was in place; however the design was based on the metric system and many components were manufactured overseas. "The first order of business was to convert the scale to SAE and source more components from the USA," says Joe Grell, vice president of heavy capacity products for Rice Lake Weighing Systems. "Our name has always stood for quality, and we wanted the new livestock scale line to continue that tradition."

Located in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, the company was established in 1946 to support the area's thriving dairy industry. What began as a small scale service shop over 70 years ago, has evolved into a first-class manufacturer of a full offering of weighing solutions, from micro-precision to ultra-heavy capacity scales. While the company's equipment can be found in a wide variety of applications, one principle has never changed through three generations of family ownership—the Rice Lake brand represents superior quality. This is an important factor for customers; however,



Customer feedback has helped make Rice Lake's livestock scales the highest quality in the industry.

another differentiator also defines Rice Lake Weighing Systems: commitment to customer service. Both of these qualities are evident in Rice Lake's livestock scales.

"We listen to our dealers and the people using our scales," explains Joe. "They are encouraged to visit our facility to see our manufacturing process firsthand. We sit down with them and take the time to listen to their opinions. We tap into their real-world knowledge and experience with our products. It's truly a two-way street." That feedback has helped shape the livestock scale line as modifications have been made throughout the years, based on customer feedback, to refine the design and include additional models. Originally, the lineup included only the MAS-M mobile livestock scale when it was acquired by Rice Lake. Today, the company offers a large variety of models, including additional mobile options as well as stationary livestock scales and instrumentation developed in-house.



The line of communication is not confined to in-person visits. It is always open at Rice Lake. The company's customer support is available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. "We know how important it is when a scale goes down," Joe adds. "We have a huge stock of replacement parts for both our equipment and competitors' scales so we can ship immediately if something is needed. When someone commits to Rice Lake with their scale purchase, we are also committed to them through our customer support."

Manufactured in Wisconsin

In 2016, after five years of manufacturing the industry's toughest livestock scales, Rice Lake added a badge of pride to each model's finish: the "Manufactured in Wisconsin" logo. Created by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the logo represents more than certification of a product's origin—to Rice Lake, it

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embodies the values of hard-working, small-town employees who are linked to each and every scale. It represents devotion, loyalty and reliability.

With reliability at the forefront, Rice Lake's livestock scale designs have been thoroughly evaluated through finite element analysis (FEA) to calculate how they will respond to real-world physical forces. These designs are the foundation on which steadfast dependability is built, and any great design must be carried out through a first-class manufacturing process. While some manufacturers cut corners to save costs, depriving their scales of needed features and strength to combat the challenges they will endure on the ranch, Rice Lake commits to quality and integrity.

Rice Lake's livestock manufacturing process begins when livestock scale steel arrives at the Rice Lake plant. It is shot-blasted to remove any residual mill scale, then cut to size and brought to a welding station. Welders must be properly



The livestock scale manufacturing team takes pride in each and every scale they produce.

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certified through an in-house, six-month training program before they work on actual products. Numerous fixtures are utilized throughout the process to ensure safety and consistent, high-quality results. As each step is completed, a quality check is performed before the scale can proceed to the next step.

Once a scale is fully assembled, the finishing touch can be applied: each livestock scale is powder coated for ultimate long-term durability. This not only adds visual appeal to Rice Lake's livestock scales, but also increases resistance to the environment. Although liquid paint is suitable for scales in many standard applications, powder coating is used for Rice Lake's livestock scales due to the challenging farm environment. Once the coating is applied, livestock scales enter one of Rice Lake's massive, state-of-the-art curing ovens. Elevated temperatures transform the powder from its dry state into a dense film, better suited to withstand dirt, chemicals, scrapes and impacts.

The finished product is a solid, masterful testament to the many hours of dedicated labor and attention to detail. However, Rice Lake is never content with the present—the company continually looks for ongoing improvements to further enhance and perfect its products. The livestock scales department has a team assigned to evaluate this process. Weekly meetings take place to discuss options for streamlining processes, fine-tuning design and enhancing the livestock scale line to maintain its position as the toughest and most reliable on the market.

Since the first day of Rice Lake's livestock scale line, many changes have taken place. From raw materials to the finishing process, a deep commitment is poured into each livestock scale. Before a scale is ready to leave the doors of Rice Lake Weighing Systems, a proud worker strongly adheres the "Manufactured in Wisconsin" logo by hand—a prominent branding that not only declares where it was created but also why it will stand up to the test of time. ■



From Farm to Forge: Rice Lake's Workforce Advantage

Like many of Rice Lake Weighing Systems' employees, Nate Mathison is accustomed to hard work. He grew up on Crisly Dairy Farm in nearby Cumberland, Wisconsin, an impressive operation in its fourth generation of family ownership.

While many of his classmates spent their summers in front of a television, Nate worked sunup to sundown making hay and finishing chores to help the farm flourish. "It takes a lot of hard work and commitment to work on a farm," Nate remembers. "Sixteen-hour days are not uncommon, but you just do what needs to be done and don't think about how hard it is.



Nate Mathison's childhood on Crisly Dairy Farm contributed to his work ethic today.

Everyone in the family shares the same mentality. We know we're all in this together and that it requires teamwork in order to succeed."

Established in 1909, Crisly Dairy Farm has cultivated each generation's hard work to grow from a small barn to a 120-cow freestyle parlor, complemented with cropland. "Knowing how small it used to be," Nate explains, "Where it's at today is truly incredible! It's a testament to how effective the family atmosphere can be, and that hard work pays off."

Now serving as Rice Lake's first shift supervisor for livestock scale production, Nate utilizes many of the attributes he learned from the farm on the job. "There are a lot of similarities between the two," Nate says. "We have a family atmosphere here at Rice Lake Weighing Systems. We're all in this together, too, and it takes a lot of teamwork to make a quality product we can be proud of."

Nate's background is shared by numerous other employees at Rice Lake, throughout all levels of the company. Pride, loyalty and dependability are cornerstones of Rice Lake's success, and the company's location in the heart of America's dairyland brings this unique workforce advantage.

"That 'Manufactured in Wisconsin' logo carries with it a lot of pride," Nate concludes. "We are proud of our state. I loved growing up on a farm, and today I am grateful that I help build these livestock scales. Being able to see the fruits of your labor is something I celebrated on the farm, and today I get the same satisfaction when I see a finished scale." ■



Nate Mathison, first shift supervisor for livestock scale production, is focused on quality and teamwork.