

# *DairyNZ Career Pathways*

*Progressing your dairy career*



**DairyNZ** 



**For more information visit [dairynz.co.nz](http://dairynz.co.nz) or phone 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969)**

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# Introduction

Welcome to DairyNZ Career Pathways. This guide has been created for both employees and employers to help employees review career options, look at roles on farm and create a career pathway.

The kit provides information for salaried positions on farm.

## Typically dairy farmers achieve their career goals when:

1. They understand the different roles available and the different career paths.
2. They know what their current skills, knowledge and expertise are.
3. They develop career goals.
4. They have the opportunity to discuss their goals.
5. They are supported by their managers and farm owners.

To achieve these outcomes employees need to communicate what their career expectations are and employers need to work with their employees to help them realise their goals. This resource can be used exactly the way it is or fine-tuned to suit your needs.

## Employees

### Using this guide

This career guide has been developed to give you information about other roles on farm, explain the skills you might need to develop and identify where you need to learn more.

Taking the first step to planning your career pathway may seem like a daunting task, but by breaking your end goal down into three easy steps your outcome will seem much more achievable:

- **Step One.** Reviewing different roles on farm to understand what your career pathway may look like.
- **Step Two.** Doing the assessment to recognise what your current skills and knowledge are.
- **Step Three.** Discussing your career pathway and how you are tracking with your manager.

### Benefits

- Understand what your current skill level is.
- Create a career pathway.
- Have the opportunity to discuss with your manager or farm owner what your career pathway is and how they can support you on it.
- Progression opportunities can be realised.

## Employers

### Using this guide

This career guide has been developed to provide you with an opportunity to discuss your employees' career aspirations and goals.

Understanding and learning about your employees as individuals is key to recognising what motivates them to do well. Whether you employ 2 or 20 people it is equally important to see each employee as an individual, helping them work towards their career goals and growing their skills and abilities.

Use the Career Pathway catch-up guides to talk to your employees about their career goals and how they are tracking on your farm. It's a great opportunity to have an informal discussion around aspirations and goals, rather than simply focussing on performance and tasks.

**Benefits**

- Greater employee engagement as a result of being supported by employers.
- Training and coaching opportunities can be realised.
- More skilled employees.

Career Pathways is available in hard copy by ordering online from [dairynz.co.nz](http://dairynz.co.nz) or ringing DairyNZ on 0800 4 DairyNZ (08008 4 324 7969). Career Pathways can be downloaded from [dairynz.co.nz](http://dairynz.co.nz) along with extra career assessments and catch-up templates.

**Typical career paths on farm**

It is probably true to say that if you brought together 100 farmers from across the regions, all would have a different tale to tell about their 'typical' career path.

With a diverse range of roles on farm, varying sizes of farm and differing levels of skills needed across farms, a typical role is almost unheard of.

Smaller farms can provide the opportunity to develop your skills across the broader farm business, whilst larger farms may focus on fine tuning skills in specific roles and key areas of the business. Again though, there are exceptions to every rule.

When planning your own career, choose roles that suit the needs of yourself, your family and your career plan. If you feel you are not ready for the next step, take your time to develop your skills further. Talk to your employer about other ways of developing your role and be open to ideas about how to progress in the industry.

Salary information for different roles can be obtained from a variety of sources including Federated Farmers and your local agricultural people management consultant. Market salaries for roles should reflect skill levels required and level of responsibility and autonomy as well as other local and market factors.

**Other DairyNZ resources****Go Dairy**

- Provides an overview of what it is like to be a dairy farmer and the importance of dairy farming to the New Zealand economy.
- Describes how to get your first dairy farming job.
- Visit [godairy.co.nz](http://godairy.co.nz).

**Dairy industry standard roles**

- Describes the experience, level of supervision, knowledge and attributes of farming roles.
- Identifies formal and informal training opportunities.
- Order through [dairynz.co.nz/people](http://dairynz.co.nz/people).

**DairyNZ people website**

- Practical people information for employers and employees.
- Contains answers to commonly asked questions that help you get the best from your team and from your job.
- Visit [dairynz.co.nz/people](http://dairynz.co.nz/people).

**DairyNZ discussion groups and workshops**

- Latest issues and ideas are discussed.
- Opportunity to network with other farmers and learn different ways of doing things.
- Visit [dairynz.co.nz](http://dairynz.co.nz) for an event near you.



Step one

# Step one: Farm roles

# Farm assistant

(also known as assistant and senior assistant)

**Farm assistant**  
new entrant-2 years on farm

Herd manager

Assistant manager

Farm manager

Operations manager

## Overview

**Assist with day to day tasks on farm, including feeding, milking, animal health and environmental management.**

## What does the role cover?

This “hands on” entry level job is the first step in a dairy farming career. You will gain practical experience in all aspects of day-to-day farming. On larger farms you will work as part of a team, while on smaller farms you will often work directly alongside the farm owner. In both cases you will be under direct supervision while you develop your skills and gain experience and responsibility. Working as a farm assistant provides an excellent opportunity to be exposed to most tasks on farm.

## What experience will I need?

Farm assistants are often recruited without any prior experience, but ensuring you have a number of essential personal qualities is key to being successful in the role. These include; a willingness to learn, an interest in working in an outdoor environment and physical fitness.

## How long will I work in this role?

If you are planning to progress your career you can expect to work for two years at farm assistant level.

However, many choose to stay in the role for considerably longer and employers are happy to continue to develop and grow farm assistants over a longer period of time.

## Essential personal qualities for role

**Can follow instructions** – Follows work routines and directions.

**Can do attitude** – Approaches tasks and responsibility with enthusiasm and willingness.

**Flexibility** – Willing to adapt to fit in with the farm team.

**Team player** – Can work with other team members.

**Trustworthy** – Other team members can trust you to do the right thing.

**Willingness to learn** – Eager to learn new skills and put learning into practice on farm.

**Tidy/organised** – Punctual will be where you say you are going to be on time.

**Respectful** – Of all other staff members, cows and farm equipment.

**Communication – written and verbal** – Able to communicate clearly with other team members. Both written and verbal.

## What qualifications would be useful?

The following qualifications can be accessed through your local Primary ITO (find out more [primaryito.ac.nz](http://primaryito.ac.nz))

### Primary ITO

- Milk Quality 1
- General Skills Level 2
- Dairy Breeding Level 3
- Dairy Health and Husbandry Level 3
- Dealing with Dairy Farm Effluent

## What is the typical next role?

Herd manager

## Personal qualities to develop in this role

**Organisational skills** – Managing your work and personal life.

**Time Management** – Prioritising your farm tasks to make sure the most important tasks are achieved on time.

**Active listening** – Giving full attention to others and taking the time to understand what they have said.

**Goal focus** – Understanding the importance of working towards targets such as production, and know what is needed to achieve them.

**Initiative** – Coming up with new ideas or completing a task without being asked e.g. washing the yard after milking.



## Typical duties include

**The role of farm assistant will be carried out under full supervision, so you can learn in a safe environment.**

You should expect to get involved in the following tasks:

### Farm productivity

- Moving and handling animals safely on the farm.
- Keeping an eye on animal housing, fences, feed and water condition. Reporting back about any issues or concerns.
- Feeding cows. Learning to use the equipment needed.
- Controlling weeds in the pasture.
- Putting up and taking down temporary electric fences.

### Milking

- Operating the top gate and backing gate.
- Setting up the gates in the yard.
- Helping to look after the dairy shed and keeping it clean, tidy and maintained.
- Looking out for animal health issues, especially mastitis.
- Helping to maintain shed hygiene and carrying out yard wash.

### Animals

- Identifying sick or injured animals and helping with treating them.
- Picking up one day old calves and transporting them safely from paddock to calf shelter.
- Getting involved with calf rearing.
- Keeping an eye out for cows on heat; observing and reporting behaviour of bulling cows.

### Operating environment

- Completing basic checks before using farm vehicles.
- Moving cows to stand-off areas.
- Starting to think about the impact of actions and on-farm practices (both positive and negative) on the environment. Minimising any negative impact through good work practices, observations and reporting concerns.

### Team duties

- Working within the guidelines of the farm health and safety policies and procedures.
- Using all personal protective equipment provided.
- Reporting health and safety concerns to your manager.
- Safely operating all farm machinery including motorbikes and tractors.

## Thinking about taking the next step? Consider these quick questions

- Are you looking for a new challenge at work and extra responsibility?
- Are you ready to take responsibility for routine tasks such as milking?

## Now you need to make a decision, you could...

1. Continue as a farm assistant but on a different farming system

Different farm systems have differing opportunities such as;

- I. Larger farms often have positions with more specialised tasks
- II. Smaller farms generally offer opportunities where you get to complete a wide range of tasks
- III. High input farms usually focus on cow nutrition
- IV. Pasture based systems concentrate on pasture management

2. Progress to a herd manager's role.

## Jonathan Bruce

**Current role:** Farm assistant

**Age:** 20

**Family:** Single, sharing life with Allie, his dog

**Passionate about:** The outdoors and working with animals

**Works in:** Waikato

### Farm information

**Effective area:** 200 ha

**Herd:** 285 Friesian cows

**Production:** 500 kg MS/cow

**Shed:** 22 aside herringbone

**Staff:** Manager and farm assistant

**Feed system:** High input with a covered stand-off facility

### Career pathway

**Length of time in role:** 4 months

- Finished Morrinsville High School at 17
- Studied Mechanic and Heavy Vehicle Pre-Trade course (Level 3) – Waikato Institute of Technology (6 month course)
- Apprentice tractor mechanic (2 years)
- Apprentice truck mechanic (6 months)
- Maize contractor (6 months)
- Farm assistant (4 months)

Jonathan was brought up on a dry stock farm and his extended family are dairy farmers. When he left high school he wanted to go dairy farming but he was encouraged by his family to learn a trade first. Jonathan has found that his mechanical knowledge has transitioned him well into dairy farming and gives him the skills to complete routine machinery maintenance as well as confidence using equipment.

**Next career goal:** Jonathan's career goal is to go 50/50 sharemilking. He is currently saving to buy his first herd of cows. He plans to stay on farm until he can go sharemilking.



*Jonathan Bruce – farm assistant*

### Overview

A typical day involves milking including setting up the dairy, doing the yard wash and milking, setting up the effluent irrigator, spraying weeds, putting up and taking down break fences, loading the feed out wagon and feeding out in the covered stand-off facility.

### Describe the role of a farm assistant

To assist the manager with day-to-day tasks. For example Jonathan is learning to identify mastitis, observe treatments and understand milk withholding periods. Since there is only a manager and a farm assistant on the farm Jonathan gets to do a variety of tasks.

*“When you first start dairying it helps to know the right people and enjoy working outdoors in all weather conditions.”*

# First year on farm

Your first year in any new role is always daunting.

The prospect of working alongside people you don't yet know, perhaps living away from home the first time, needing to learn every element of the job from scratch and fit with an existing team is hard. It feels like a very steep learning curve and it is!

In your first year of farming you should expect to do a lot of listening and a lot of learning.

It is going to be a bit of a culture shock. You might not be used to getting up early in the morning and being outside in all weather conditions. You are going to need to be prepared to get mentally and physically fit. You also need to accept that many things are going to happen that you don't understand but it will gradually start to make sense. Be curious, have a passion for learning and you will soon be on the road to success.

## **When you start your job:**

- Work through your job description with your employer.
- Ask questions to ensure you understand what is expected of you.
- Take the time to walk through the property (if applicable) you will be renting.
- You have responsibilities as a tenant to look after the property. Ask questions;
- Is there a garden – are you responsible for it?
- How is rubbish disposed of? Is it collected or do you have to dispose of it?
- What are the sources of heating? Do you know where to source or buy firewood?
- Who do you talk to about any concerns you have about the property?
- Do you understand how you will be paid?
- If you are a migrant employee check that your driver licence is legal in New Zealand and that you have an IRD number.
- Sit down with your employer and work through a training plan. Ask questions about how you will learn on farm and who will be responsible for your learning?

# Alison Dagg

**Current role:** Assistant herd manager

**Age:** 21

**Family:** Single

**Passionate about:** Traveling and cows

**Works in:** Canterbury

Enjoys dairy farming because she gets to work outdoors and gets to meet a number of people involved in farming, such as the PGG Wrightson representative's and other farm staff.

## Farm information

**Effective area:** 370 ha

**Herd:** 1500 crossbred cows

**Shed:** 62 bale rotary

**Staff:** 7 full time staff

**Target production for the season:**

620,000kg MS = 413kg MS/cow

*(The farm is part of a large scale farm with 6 individual farm units)*

## Career pathway

**Length of time in role:** 18 months

**Current career path:**

- Farm assistant (4 months)
- Travel (8 months)
- Farm assistant (1 season)

**Currently assistant herd manager**

**Next career goal:** To step up to a 2IC role next season.



*Alison Dagg - assistant herd manager*

## Progressing from a farm assistant to assistant herd manager

**How did you know you were ready for a promotion?**

It was an easy transition to an assistant herd manager once I had the necessary skills.

**What skills and attitude did you need to receive your promotion?**

Taking responsibility for my tasks on farm and learning to be more tolerant and patient of other people was important in helping me step up to an assistant herd manager's role. I am now responsible for making sure the effluent system is doing what it should be doing, looking at pre and post grazing residuals and reporting them back to the manager and tractor work including feeding out and heavy rolling.

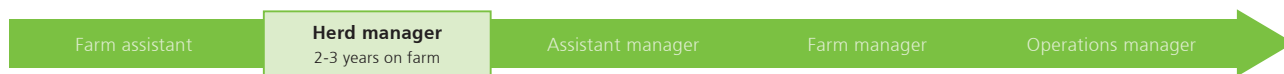
**What is the difference between a farm assistant and assistant herd manager's role?**

As a farm assistant you are not expected to always know why tasks happen on farm whereas an assistant herd manager understands the farm's systems. As the assistant herd manager I am often coaching farm assistants on the farm systems and helping farm assistants solve minor problems.

*"Dairying is not for everyone but if you are interested give it a go and you will learn heaps of transferable skills, meet great people and have the most fun you can at 4am."*

# Herd manager

(also known as assistant herd manager)



If you can answer yes to the following questions, then it's time to step into the role of herd manager. Can you;

- Feed out supplements on your own, either in the paddock or on a feed pad?
- Treat common animal health issues (with assistance)?
- Have the confidence to supervise relief milkers and junior staff?

## Overview

**Having worked as a farm assistant for the past two years, this is the next step up the career ladder. It may be your first role where you take some responsibility for supervising staff or completing key areas of work independently.**

On large scale farms, it is not unusual for the farm to employ more than one herd manager. Each will be responsible for a different herd, depending on the structure of the farm.

As a general rule you should only require limited supervision as you will be competent at completing most tasks on farm.

## What does the role cover?

The role requires you to take responsibility for some day to day operations; running the dairy shed and other routine tasks.

## What experience will I need?

Most farms will be looking to employ a herd manager who has worked reliably at farm assistant level for the past one to two years.

This role provides the opportunity to begin supervising staff, so whilst no management experience is required, the desire to support and supervise staff is critical to success.

## How long will I work in this role?

If you are planning to progress your career you could expect to work for one to two years as a herd manager.

However, others may choose to stay in the role for considerably longer and employers are happy to continue to develop and grow herd managers over a longer period of time.

## What is the typical next role?

Assistant manager

## What additional qualifications would be useful?

### Primary ITO:

- Milk Quality Stage 2
- Feeding and Pastures Level 3
- Dairy Farming Level 4

## Typical duties include

### Farm productivity

- Working with the farm manager to determine break sizes to meet feed requirements.
- Loading and feeding out supplements on either a feed pad or in the paddock.

### Milking

- Responsible for the day-to-day milking routine including:
  - Setting up the cow shed, milking and the plant; vat and yard wash.
  - Working with the farm manager to detect, draft and treat animals with health issues during milking.
- Working with the farm team to help maintain grade free standards.

### Animals

- Working alongside the farm manager to ensure proper process is followed to detect and record cows on heat.
- Assisting with calving cows and knowing when a calf is in the correct calving position.
- Knowing the symptoms of common health issues and reporting them to your manager. Treating them with assistance.
- Working with your manager to maintain all herd records.
- Apply magnesium to pastures.

### Operating environment

- Identifying any repairs or maintenance required on farm; participating in carrying out any repairs as instructed.
- Shifting the effluent irrigator and ensuring it is working effectively. Reporting any faults to manager.

### Team duties

- Supervising junior staff as they carry out routine tasks.
- Leading junior staff by example.
- Working within the guidelines of health and safety policies and procedures.

### Business

- Becoming aware of the "big picture" on a dairy farm i.e. in general terms about the income and costs.

## Additional essential personal qualities for role

*(In addition to those listed for previous roles)*

**Patience** – Towards other team members and livestock.

**Focussed on improvement** – Looking for more efficient ways of doing things and coming up with new ideas and evaluating how they could be included into the farm system.

## Personal qualities to develop in this role

**Delegation** – Selecting the most competent person to carry out a task and taking responsibility for the outcome.

**People skills** – Beginning to understand how to motivate, direct and supervise staff.

Coaching junior staff by providing constructive feedback and knowing how to teach others a new task.

**Calm and collected** – Especially when the farm is under pressure during calving or when there is an urgent issue.

**Uses initiative** – Identifying problems, creating a number of possible solutions and implementing the best one.

# Career planning and wellbeing

When considering your career, it's also important to think about how the choices you make around roles and career paths will affect your wellbeing.

The easiest way to measure wellbeing is by thinking in terms of enjoyment. The more you enjoy your work and your life, the better your wellbeing.

Wellbeing also comes from balance; however, there are times in the farming year when your hours and workload increase and the balance is changed. Most of this simply comes out of the necessity to get the job done, with a typical example being around calving. Concentrate on what you need to do during these busier periods to ensure you are able to remain focussed and have the energy to keep up, make sure you:

- eat well,
- get as much quality sleep as possible, and
- minimise your stress.

Remember, poor communication can be a prime cause of stress. It can result in a lack of understanding of goals and targets. Take the time to ensure you know what the goals are for the task at hand. What do you need to focus on, how will you prioritise your tasks?

Keep the lines of communication open and make sure you raise any concerns you have in a positive way.

It's also important that you have time to connect with others, share your talents, do what you love and learn new things. Whether you need to make improvements to your wellbeing in your current role, or want to think more about wellbeing in your next role, there are a few on and off-farm things for you to consider.

## **On-the-job:**

- How much variety do you need in your job?
- Do you prefer to work closely with others, or independently?
- Where are you most likely to add value and will your role give you an opportunity to do this?
- Do you prefer working with stock, grass, machinery or people?
- Do you prefer to have structure around your daily tasks or just go with the flow?
- How important is learning new things to you? Will this job allow for adequate learning opportunities?

## **Off-the-job:**

- How important is time with your family and friends? How much time? And when? Will this role/career allow for these preferences?
- What hobbies and interests do you have outside of work? Will this role, career and location allow you access to these activities?
- What makes your partner and/or children happy and will this career or role allow for their happiness?

## David Guzman Calderon

**Current role:** Herd manager

**Age:** 24

**Family:** Single

**Passionate about:** Hiking, four wheel driving, table tennis, soccer, social life and friends

**Works in:** Canterbury

### Farm information

**Area ha:** 342 ha

**Effective area:** 335 ha

**Herd:** 1400 crossbred cows wintered, 1370 peak cows milked

**Shed:** 50 bale rotary

**Staff:** 7 full time staff, 2 spring calf rearers

**Target production for the season:**

636,000 kgMS = 1900 kg/ha, 464 kgMS/cow

### Career pathway

**Length of time in role:** 3 years 6 months

#### Current career path:

- Farm assistant (1 year)
- Assistant herd manager (6 months)
- Herd manager – 1400 cows (3 years 6 months)
- 2IC/assistant manager – 950 cows (1 year)

#### Current role:

Herd manager – 1400 cows

#### Next career move:

To get the “right” 2IC/assistant manager position in the next 12-24 months.



David Guzman Calderon – herd manager

### Overview

A typical day involves milking, animal health treatments, feeding out, shifting irrigation (season dependent), setting up breaks and feed allocation. Some days may involve repairs and maintenance, team meetings or training.

#### Describe the role of herd manager

To be responsible for key areas of herd management throughout the season. For example, during calving taking full responsibility for the main calving herd, drafting springers, matching cows and calves, calving cows, checking that cows have calved and treating downer cows. During mating assisting when needed with artificial insemination.

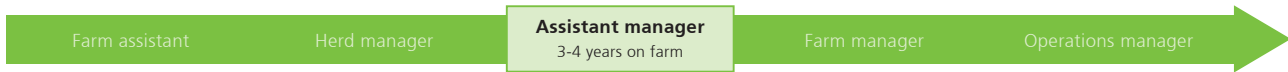
Milking throughout the season. Managing the irrigation, particularly the rotorainers and sprinklers. Feeding out and farm and machinery maintenance as required through the season. Helping with drying off cows and then their management through the winter months.

*“To be successful the most important thing is to love what you are doing and then the learning and networking will come naturally.”*



# Assistant manager

(also known as 2IC)



## Overview

**Overall the assistant manager is working at a much higher level.**

They have a greater focus on supporting staff, training and supervising staff than herd manager. The assistant manager is also more responsible for implementing policies and procedures.

It is not unusual for the assistant manager to be fully responsible for all staff, in the absence of the owner/ manager.

As a general rule, your level of competence in completing most tasks on farm should require you to work with very limited supervision.

### What does the role cover?

The assistant manager will assist with the management of day-to-day activities linked to farm production. They will implement farm policies and plans, including day to day planning and staff management, in the absence of the farm manager/owner.

### What experience will I need?

You will ideally have one to two years' experience working as a herd manager. At assistant manager level you will have been working on farm for a minimum of three to four years.

You may report directly to the farm owner, or a farm manager or operations manager on a larger farm. This role will continue to provide training and development opportunities to extend your knowledge and responsibility level.

### How long will I work in this role?

If you are planning to progress your career you could expect to work for one to two years at assistant manager level.

For many this is the last step before moving into a farm manager's role. It's a great opportunity to ensure you have the skills, competence and experience needed before moving up.

### What is the typical next role?

Farm manager

### What additional ideal qualifications do I need?

*(In addition to previous roles outlined)*

#### Primary ITO:

- Production Management
- Rural Staff Management
- Dairy Farming Level 4

## Typical duties include

### Farm productivity

- Completing documentation required on farm, with minimal support.
- Ensuring all farm policies are implemented.
- Gathering information on farm to influence feeding decisions i.e. farm-walks and grass cover.
- Knowledge and understanding of production targets.
- Carrying out a feed budget and working out when supplementary feed is needed. Also understand if cows are being fed the correct amount by analysing post grazing residuals.

### Milking

- Overall responsibility for all milking activities.
- Trouble shooting and rectifying problems and knowing when further advice or help is required.
- Monitoring the tanker docket.
- Knowledge about decisions regarding drying off and discusses this with farm manager.

### Animals

- Implementing the preventative animal health programme for common health issues including mastitis, milk fever, lameness, grass staggers and ketosis.
- Monitoring and reporting cow condition including body scoring, and discussing their management.
- Implementing the mating plan, including the management of non-cycling cows and synchronising cows.
- Managing calving in farm manager's absence.
- Diagnosing, treating and knowing when to seek further assistance for animal health problems.
- Undertaking good animal welfare practice.

### Business

- Planning farm tasks ahead of time and knowing what preparation and supplies are needed.
- Be aware of monthly cash flows.
- Monitoring operational key performance indicators (KPI's) and reporting results.

### Natural resources

- Working within consent guidelines and proactively taking steps to ensure that there is no breach of consents.
- Knowing what factors impact on waterways and managing those.

## People

- Training new staff.
- Allocating jobs within the team.
- Running the farm in the farm manager's absence.

## Essential personal qualities for role

*(In addition to previous roles outlined)*

**Works without direction** – Prioritising work to be carried out on farm, without instruction or direction from others.

**Trustworthy** – Other team members can trust you to do the right thing.

**Social perceptiveness** – Being aware of other's reactions. Understanding why they react as they do and the impact you have on others.

**Stockmanship** – Recognising changes in animal behaviour that may indicate a health issue.

**Judgement** – Quickly processing information and making the best possible decision from the options identified.

**Focussed on improvement** – Looking for more efficient ways of doing things, coming up with new ideas and evaluating how they could be included in the farm system.

**Forward thinking** – Considering upcoming issues and workloads and proactively taking action.

## Personal qualities to develop in this role

**Empathy** – Listening and recognising concerns highlighted by staff. Acknowledging those concerns to be 'real' for the individual involved.

**High level communicator** – Effective communication skills across all levels of the farm, including strategic plans.

**Target driven** – Being motivated by achieving and working towards targets.

**Informed** – Networking and reading widely. Staying abreast of the issues that are impacting on dairy farming practices and profitability. Translating this into action on farm.

**Diversity awareness** – Acknowledging and working with other people's strengths and weaknesses, perspectives and points of view.

## Steve Gillies

**Current role:** Assistant manager

**Age:** 27

**Family:** Charlie, his dog

**Passionate about:** Young Farmers, socialising and dairy farming

**Works in:** Waipa, Waikato

### Farm information

**Effective area:** 145 ha

**Herd:** 650 Friesians autumn calving

**Shed:** 46 bale rotary

**Staff:** Owner, assistant manager, herd manager's x2

**Feed system:** High input feed pad system

### Career pathway

#### Current career path:

- Mechanic (8 years)
- Farm assistant (7 months)
- 2IC (2 years)
- Assistant manager (16 months)

#### Current role:

Assistant manager and enrolled in the Primary ITO Agribusiness Diploma.

#### Next career move:

To go contract milking and progress to sharemilking.

Steve has only worked for one dairy farm employer who is very supportive of Steve's career. Steve and his employer discuss Steve's career pathway once a year, however Steve often picks his employers' brain on career advancement and sharemilking.

*"Work hard, play hard."*



*Steve Gillies – assistant manager*

### Overview

Steve's typical day is different to many dairy farms because the farm is high input, large amounts of supplements are fed out on the feed pad, and the farm is also Autumn calving.

A typical day involves milking or organising milking, calculating supplementary feed required, feeding out on the feed pad, maintenance, pasture management, and staff management including delegating tasks. On a typical day Steve checks on the morning milking to make sure all is ok. Steve then milks the penicillin cows and mixes supplementary feed which is fed out on the feed pad. After lunch he feeds out again on the feed pad, moves cows off the feed pad for milking, milks any penicillin cows, runs the vat and plant wash and then sets the auto gate timers for the paddock the cows are in for the morning.

#### Describe the role of assistant manager

Steve thinks his job is the best job in the world! His role is to ensure the farm runs smoothly and is productive.

# Deciding whether to progress

Deciding whether to move away from the role you currently have and accept promotion is not easy. It requires considerable thought as the progression can mean moving from a position of assisting with management to being fully involved with farm goals, profitability and ensuring long term farm viability.

The checklist below helps guide your decision making when thinking about moving on and considers all aspects of your personal and working life.

## Deciding whether to progress checklist

Before you decide it's time to move on and accept a promotion, use our guide to ask yourself and your partner some key questions.

**Are you ready for a change?** Yes / No

Notes:

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**Are you willing to give up your current position?** Yes / No

Notes:

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**Do you have the necessary skills that the new role requires?** Yes / No

Notes:

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**Once you have a clear understanding of what the role consists of, you'll be able to decide if you'll excel at the job. There's nothing worse than working in a job that makes you feel like a failure. If you don't have all the necessary skills, what will you need to learn as a priority?**

Notes:

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### Think about:

Just because a promotion offers a new job, more money or a few perks that doesn't mean it will increase your job satisfaction. To do that, the position must match your interests and strengths.

Notes:

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**Will my relationships suffer or be improved (e.g. family and friends)?** Yes / No

*Health and a good balance between work and life are critical to happiness and stress management. If the new job assignment will mean significantly longer hours and / or bringing work home after hours then consider the impact on your health both physically and mentally.*

Notes:

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**Will I earn more money?** Yes / No

*Think about whether there are any expenses that you will incur in this new role, and whether you will financially gain in real terms. If you're only interested in the promotion because it means more money, be careful. You may find that the additional salary wasn't worth it.*

Notes:

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**Do I know whom will I be replacing, where are they going, and why?** Yes / No

*Find out a bit more about the person you are replacing, what sort of reputation they had. If you are going to manage staff, find out what the staff liked / disliked about their management style, it will give you a few pointers to get you started.*

Notes:

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**Do I know who will be my new boss and what is he or she like?** Yes / No

*The saying goes that people don't leave jobs, they leave managers. This is something to consider when deciding on a promotion. If your current boss is a good role model and is well respected, make sure that your new boss will be as good or a better mentor.*

Notes:

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**Will I have to re-locate (and am I open to that?)** Yes / No

*Think about the cost of moving too; factor that into your pay. Check out the facilities provided, does the accommodation suit your needs.*

Notes:

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**Will the expectations of the job match the salary I receive?** Yes / No

Check what is expected of the job, does it match the salary you will receive? Weigh up all the options.

Notes:

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**Will I learn new skills that are valuable to me?** Yes / No

*Moving to a different farm will hopefully involve learning new skills, or putting your current skills to the test on a different farm. If you feel like there will be no challenge in the new job, consider why you are moving.*

Notes:

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**Work through the checklist and then review your answers before you make a final decision. It's often better to grow in confidence and exceed at a role, than it is to accept promotion too early.**

# Farm manager

(also known as production manager)

Farm assistant

Herd manager

Assistant manager

**Farm manager**  
Minimum 5 years on farm

Operations manager

## Overview

**Responsible for meeting farm goals, including all aspects of production, stock, environmental and staff management. Likely to be involved in the budgeting process, but will not set the budget.**

### What does the role cover?

In this role you will be responsible for implementing the short and long term business plans. This includes responsibility for the financial and physical performance of the farm.

A farm manager is highly skilled in all aspects of the farm business. You will have a high degree of autonomy and be expected to drive the business. On larger farms this role will also include responsibility for recruiting and managing staff.

### What experience will I need?

You will have a minimum of five years' experience working on farm and will have gained an overview of all the required elements needed for farm management. You will also have experience managing staff.

### How long will I work in this role?

For many the role of farm manager is their ultimate career goal. For other's it's a stepping stone to ownership.

With a diverse range of dairy farms across New Zealand there is plenty of opportunity to continue to develop your skills and expertise, over a number of years, whilst continuing to work within this role.

### What is the typical next role?

Whilst the role of operations manager does exist on large scale, usually corporate, farms, these roles are relatively uncommon.

Farm managers therefore tend to move to other more challenging farms e.g. larger cow numbers or staff numbers, or move towards farm ownership.

There are many options for moving towards ownership, these include: Equity manager, equity partner, variable order sharemilker, contract milker and 50/50 sharemilker.

### What additional ideal qualifications do I need?

*(In addition to previous roles outlined)*

#### Primary ITO:

- Diploma in Agribusiness Management
- Human Resource Module
- Resource Management and Planning Module
- Business and Finance Module
- Ownership and Risk Module
- Taxation and Investment Module
- Property Report
- Mastitis Management

#### University qualifications:

- Diploma in Farm Management
- Bachelor of Agriculture
- Bachelor of Agricultural Science
- Bachelor of Commerce (Agriculture)

## Typical duties include

### Farm productivity

- Monitoring seasonal weather events and assessing how they will affect the farm system (e.g. pasture growth rates and pasture damage).
- Balancing production and cost to meet farm policy.
- Planning and implementing pasture improvement programme including deciding which paddocks need regrassing.
- Implementing cropping policy on farm.

### Milking

- Organise herd tests as per farm policy.
- Monitoring records and/or ensuring only quality information goes to the operations manager.

### Animals

- Putting together breeding programmes that maximise genetic gain.
- Co-ordinating with breeding company and vet regarding mating plan requirements.
- Setting and monitoring the calving and calf rearing plan to meet farm policy.
- Setting annual plans for animal health programmes.
- Deciding whether to cull or treat stock.

### Business

- Ordering supplies at most economical price.
- Organising all contractors to meet farm policies and budgets.
- Maintaining knowledge of and planning to meet key performance indicators.
- Monitoring and working within budget guidelines for cost/ expenses.
- Maintaining knowledge of cost of production.

### Environment

- Setting effluent plan and monitoring system.
- Making sure all plans are implemented, monitored and up to date to meet compliance requirements.
- Following milk processor's quality assurance practices e.g. Dairy Diary.

### People

- Creating rosters for staff, including calf rearers or seasonal employees.
- Allocating role responsibilities i.e. who does what.
- Monitoring performance.

- Conflict resolution.
- Allocating the appropriate training relevant to the budget and individuals training needs.
- Building a team culture that supports the farms goals and values.
- Staff gap analysis and assessing/ implementing training requirements.

### Essential personal qualities for role

*(In addition to previous roles outlined)*

**Empathy** – Listening to and resolving concerns highlighted by staff. Acknowledging those concerns to be 'real' for the individual involved.

**High level communicator** – Effective communication skills across all levels of the farm. Able to describe strategic decisions and plans.

**Day to day decision making** – Considering the most appropriate action and implementing it.

**Forward thinking** – Considering upcoming issues and workloads and proactively taking action.

**Open minded** – Listening to the views of others and developing personally as a result.

**Diversity awareness** – Acknowledging and working with other people's strengths and weaknesses, perspectives and points of view.

**Initiative/problem solving** – Identifying problems, proposing options and implement solutions for day to day or one off occurrences.

**Calm and collected** – Especially when the farm is under pressure during calving or when there is an urgent issue.

### Personal qualities to develop in this role

**Strategic planning** – Reviewing options available and selecting the most appropriate, whilst keeping an eye on the big picture and medium / long term business plan.

**Target driven** – Being motivated by achieving and working towards targets.

**Informed** – Networking and reading widely. Staying abreast of the issues that are impacting on dairy farming practices and profitability. Translating this into action on farm.

## Mark Cudmore

**Current role:** Farm manager

**Age:** 34

**Family:** Married with four boys

**Passionate about:** Family and farming

**Works in:** Canterbury / North Otago

### Farm information

**Area ha:** 170 ha (approx)

**Effective area:** 152 ha

**Herd:** 600 mixed

**Shed:** 40 a-side herringbone

**Staff:** 4 fulltime plus casual staff for calf rearing

### Production rates:

Overall 258,000 kgMS, 430 kgMS/cow

### Career pathway

**Length of time in role:** 18 months

- Farm assistant – holiday work experience
- PGG Wrightson, Technical Field Rep. (6 years)

### Next career goal:

Over the next few years consider large herd management or contract milking/lower order sharemilker.

For now Mark plans to continue to gain experience in the position that he is in and grow his equity to help him get to his next step.



*Mark Cudmore – farm manager*

### Overview

Milk cows in the morning, breakfast, make sure staff are sorted with their jobs for the morning and work out feed for next day. Catch up any little jobs not done by staff.

Plan for the coming day's jobs required to be done.

### Describe the role of farm manager

To drive the financial and physical performance of the dairy farm.

To manage and recruit staff, and to drive the overall dairy operation.

*“Hard work, the right attitude and the willingness to learn will get you where you want to go.”*



# Growing into a management role

Dairy farmers often excel at managing the 'cows and grass' or the natural resources around them, but sometimes struggle with managing their own team. Frequently people progress from a herd manager's position to a farm manager's role, where they are managing a team of staff, without having any prior experience.

The good news is that you can start learning new skills now to make this transition to management easier and more likely!

Many individuals aspire to being great managers, but few are natural leaders of people. Most good leaders begin by developing their management skills at the early stages of their career and continuing to grow, learn and develop. They work hard at improving their skills and practising at being a good manager. If you are looking to be a great manager and leader then read on.



## What leadership and managerial skills do I need?

### Create and implement a vision

To inspire or encourage a team you need to know what you are aiming for. You will need to have an idea of what the future should be as this provides a focus for the team's activity, which in turn provides sustained long-term motivation and unites the team. Creating a vision requires knowing your business, the external environment and your own personal goals. Once created it is imperative that you communicate and encourage the team to aim to reach that vision.

### Enforce values and appropriate behaviours

We all need guidelines. As a manager your team will look to you to set the values which underpin your business. Be it demonstrating integrity by doing what you say you will do or showing respect by handling stock with great stockmanship. The way we show those values is through our behaviours. It is up to you to decide what is appropriate and what isn't and to act accordingly. No easy feat if yesterday you were part of the team. A key tip here is to learn how to give constructive meaningful feedback to team members.

### Building a strong team

Great teams don't just happen. You will need to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the team and understand their expectations so you can motivate them accordingly. If you know your team as individuals, and are open and approachable, they will feel a valued part of the business. Part of this is using your listening skills by asking for others to come up with ideas and occasionally changing your view point or accepting constructive feedback.

### Planning and organisation

An essential skill is the ability to plan and organise so that you achieve a goal or a task utilising available resources. You need to consider the consequences beyond this season and then selecting the optimal plan and communicate it to the team. At the same time it is important to ensure that work is not repeated nor problems tackled too late.

### Decision-making

An ability to quickly grasp situations and think about what can be done is required. This involves keeping your cool, readily accepting the 'wrongs' and dealing with them accordingly. Managers are a sponge, they need to keep their ears and eyes open so they can consider all relevant information and decide on the implications for your business.

### Coaching and developing staff

Without a strong team your job becomes impossible. Allow staff to make mistakes and learn from them. Encourage staff to take initiative.

### Don't panic!

A lot of the above skills take time to learn and practise. Having solid human resources practices in place will help these skills to evolve. One easy step to implementing good practice is to establish a weekly team meeting to discuss the following:

- Achievements for the week.
- Plan for the coming few weeks.
- Ideas or suggestions for change.
- Progress towards a vision or goals.

# Operations manager

(also known as farm supervisor or business manager)

Farm assistant

Herd manager

Assistant manager

Farm manager

**Operations manager**  
+5 years on farm

Operations managers or farm supervisor roles are often associated with a large scale dairy farming business that has a number of farms. Operational roles are strategic in nature and are directly responsible for returning farm/ share holder profits and ascertaining long term farm viability.

## Overview

**Responsible for planning, reviewing, executing and reporting against the overall business goals. In charge of farm management. Responsibilities cover all areas including budgeting, targets and resource requirements. May be responsible for multiple farms.**

### What does the role cover?

The operations manager works with the farm owner or directors to develop strategy. Commonly they supervise multiple farm managers and/or sharemilkers to ensure that the owner's strategy is implemented. Their role often extends to coaching farm managers working under their supervision.

The operations manager acts on behalf of the farm owner, taking responsibility to ensure that the farm owner's strategy is implemented and overall profit and production targets are met.

### What experience will I need?

An operations manager is well versed and competent in all areas of production and staff management.

With over five years of on-farm experience, having worked effectively as farm manager you will have gained expertise in all the required elements needed for productive farm management. You will also have considerable experience in managing staff, and be able to communicate effectively at all levels of the business.

### How long will I work in this role?

Many operations managers stay in their role for a considerable period of time. With a high level of autonomy, considerable responsibility and a challenging role, this is rarely a role that is for the short term.

### What is the typical next role?

The role of operations manager has no 'typical' next role. Given the high level of skills and experience needed it is not unusual for many operations managers to move straight to farm ownership.

### What additional ideal qualifications do I need?

*(In addition to previous roles outlined)*

#### Primary ITO short courses

- Train the Trainer
- Milk Quality Programme
- Effluent Management Programme.

### Typical duties include

**The operations manager is focussed on development, implementation and review of farm policies.**

#### Farm productivity

- Creating farm policies related to milking, breeding, feeding and calving.
- Communicating farm policies and any changes.

#### Milking

- Setting KPI's (key performance indicators) and performance targets.

#### Animals

- Formulating, communicating and monitoring animal welfare policies.

#### Business

- Monitoring and analysing cash-flow.
- Outlining the farm budget and communicating how funds should be allocated.
- Analysing investment.
- Analysing risk and sensitivity analysis worst case scenario.
- Setting and monitoring key performance indicators and production targets e.g. return on equity and cost of production.
- Setting clear goals and expectations especially in the company structure and linking these to farm systems and goals.
- Identifying and assessing future business growth opportunities.
- Formulating and constructing the business plan in conjunction with stakeholders.

#### Environment

- Applying for and updating, water, irrigation and building resource consents to ensure they are compliant.
- Setting out farm nutrient management plans with a direct link to fertiliser use.
- Managing development projects to expand the farm, update capital projects and farm systems.

#### People

- Setting and reviewing the human resource strategy. Including sourcing staff and increasing the capability of staff.
- Modelling good behaviour to promote a positive workplace culture.
- Understanding employer obligations and knowing when to seek specialist employment advice.

#### Essential personal qualities for role

*(In addition to previous roles outlined)*

**Strategic planning** – Reviewing options available and selecting the most appropriate whilst keeping an eye on the big picture and medium or long term business plan.

**Calm and collected** – The ability to remain calm and composed regardless of current business pressures or immediate issues.

**Informed** – Networking and reading widely. Staying abreast of the issues that are impacting on dairy farming practices and profitability. Translating this into action on farm.

**Values** – Aligning with other staff/ business partners and business goals.

#### Personal qualities to develop in this role

**Social perceptiveness** – Be aware of others' reactions. Understanding why they react as they do and the impact you have on others.

**Target driven** – Motivated by achieving and working towards targets.

# Ricky Tuck

**Current role:** Farm supervisor

**Age:** 50 something

**Family:** Married with three children and one grandchild

**Passionate about:** Rugby and his role on farm

**Works in:** Manawatu

## Farm information

**Herd:** 9700 cows overall – responsible for 8000 cows

**Staff:** 45 staff plus casuals

**Size:** 10 farms

## Career pathway

**Length of time in role:** 18 months

- Farm assistant (1 year)
- Farm manager – 350 cows & 200 bulls (3 years)
- Lower order sharemilker – 450 cows (2 years)
- 50/50 sharemilking (8 years)
- Farm supervisor Maxwell Farms (5 years)  
14500 cows, 70 staff, 12 farms

## Next career move:

I see myself in this role until retirement!

I have an interest in governance, but who knows whether I will pursue that, only time will tell.



*Ricky Tuck – farm supervisor*

## Overview

I don't think a 'typical day' exists in this role.

I spend around 60 percent of my time in the office environment (setting policy, business planning, supporting the recruitment process, health and safety), with around 40 percent on farm, sometimes less.

## Describe the role of farm supervisor

When I am on farm, working alongside the farm managers, my focus is tailored to their needs, skill set and experience. My involvement in each farm is different. It's important that I am flexible in my approach.

We have a farm advisor working in our team, so I don't spend my time working in that space.

I am often used as a sounding board or to help refocus where needed.

*“Get yourself educated – farming is a real business not just a lifestyle! If you want to make farming your career and if you want to be more than a herd manager then get yourself educated.”*

# What next?

Having worked successfully on farm, employers and employees are often looking for further opportunities to develop their skills, or even step away from hands-on roles.

## Near farm

Both on-farm employees and employers have successfully stepped off farm and changed their career pathways and taken on rural professional roles. There are a number of reasons people make the change, these can include poor health, looking for a new challenge, a growing interest in one area of the business or simply wanting a change in lifestyle.

Many successful rural professionals have had experience working on farm where they have gained a wealth of practical farming knowledge which can be used to share with other farmers. Technical rural professional roles such as banker, accountant, nutritionist and scientist often need to have studied at tertiary level. However all rural professional roles require good people management skills to engage with farmers, share knowledge and help to identify and resolve problems.

Rural professional roles are just as important as those on farm. Rural professionals provide farmers with specialist skills and knowledge to increase the efficiency of their farm business and help the New Zealand dairy industry maintain its competitive advantage.

New rural professional roles are continually being developed to meet the demand of farmers however there are a number of traditional key rural professional roles such as:

### **Farm consultant/adviser**

- Help farmers to develop their business and assist with evolving financial and business management skills.

### **Rural bank consultant**

- Work one-on-one with farmers to assess financial situations and develop financial solutions.

### **Field service representative**

- Visit farmers to promote and sell scientific or technical products. They sell grains, seeds, chemicals, farming supplies and machinery.

### **Agricultural tutor**

- Works with farmers to increase theirs and their staff capability and knowledge.



Step two

# *Step two: Skills assessments*

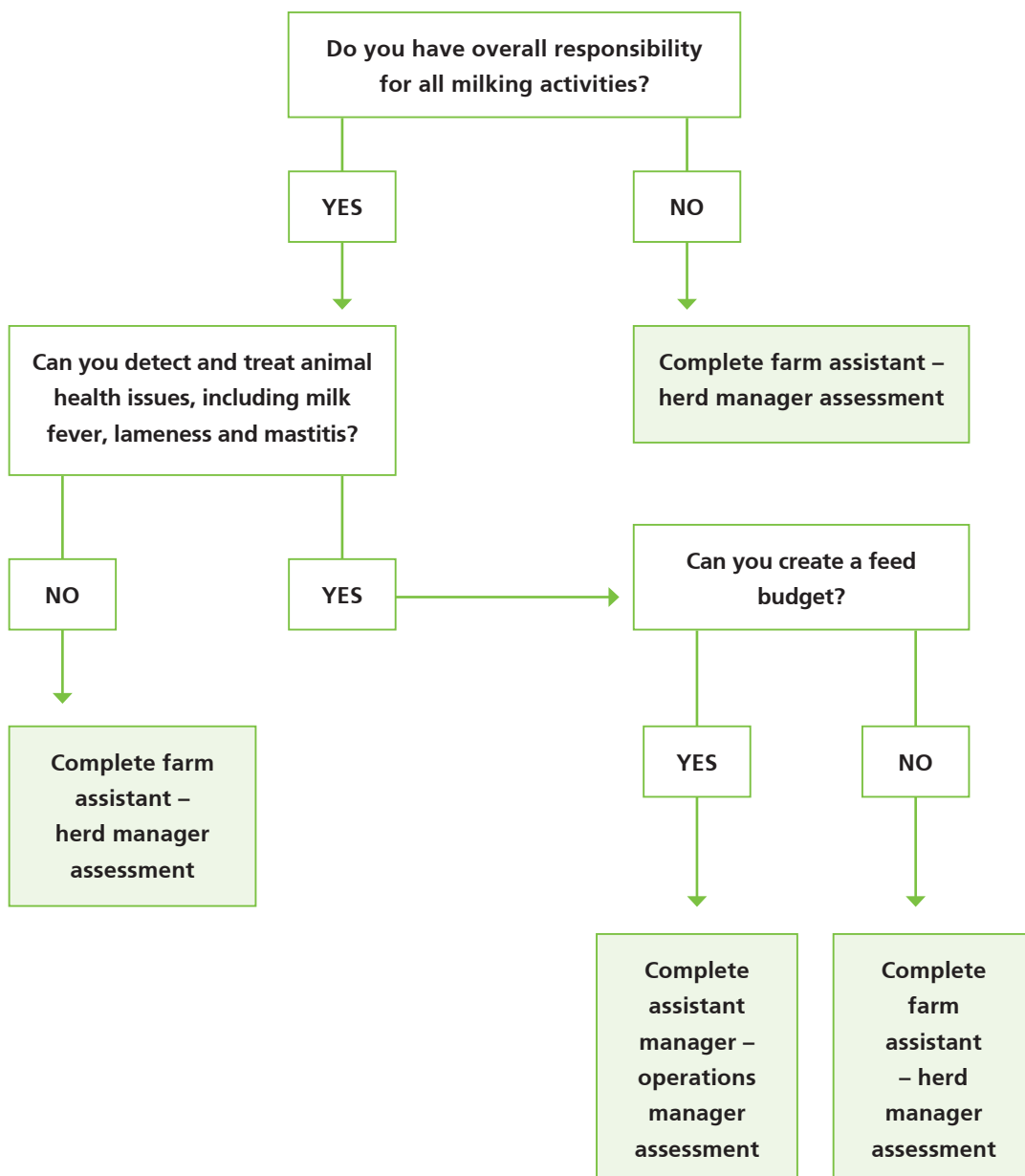
# Skills assessments

The following skills assessments have been developed to provide you with the opportunity to identify what your current level of expertise and skills are in each specific area of the farm business. It gives you the chance to analyse where you need more training and development and where you are fully competent at tasks.

## Picking the right assessment for you

The first step to completing the assessments is to choose the right assessment for you.

Use the diagram below to select your ideal assessment based on your current skills.



Step two



# Farm assistant and herd manager skills assessment

## Skills assessment

To complete the assessment;

- Read the description for each task on farm
  - Simply put a tick in the box that best represents your current skills and knowledge
- Be honest!

These tasks represent a snap shot of the broad range of tasks on farm. All farms operate differently therefore some of these tasks may not be applicable to your farm.

## Scoring

### Farm assistant – first year

You could expect most of your scoring to be under the following headings;

No experience	Currently training
✓	✓

### Farm assistant – second year

You could expect most of your scoring to be under the following headings;

Currently training	Complete with supervision
✓	✓

### Herd manager

You could expect most of your scoring to be under the following headings;

Complete independently	Complete and supervise others
✓	✓

## Results

Use the results of the skills assessment to identify where you are fully competent at tasks and what level of expertise and skills you currently have, for each specific area of the farm business.

If you are not quite working at the right level, use the results to identify where you need more training and development. Once you have completed the relevant assessment bring it along to your career pathways catch-up to discuss the results with either your manager or farm owner.

## Step two

### Farm assistant and herd manager skills assessment

FARM SYSTEMS – questions best completed in late June or early July					
Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise	No experience	Currently training – only complete fully supervised	Complete with supervision	Complete independently	Complete and supervise others
With minimal stress, safely and confidently move different stock classes including bulls and heifers					
Prepare livestock for transport					
Responsibly dispose of and manage dead stock					
Understand what good pasture looks like and can identify post and pre grazing residuals					
Can work out the size of a break feed under supervision					
Load the feed out wagon and feed out in the paddock or on the feed pad					
Beginning to understand how a farm operates as a business including how the dairy pay-out effects income and the cost associated with farming					
Understand what the cost and implications are of grading milk and high somatic cell counts					
Regular maintenance of farm machinery					

*Farm assistant and herd manager skills assessment*

CALVING AND BUSINESS – questions best completed in late October or early November					
Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise	No experience	Currently training – only complete fully supervised	Complete with supervision	Complete independently	Complete and supervise others
Can identify the symptoms of common animal health issues: milk fever, ketosis, grass staggers, mastitis, lameness, retained membranes and facial eczema					
Can identify the stages of calving, when a cow is calving and when a calf is in a normal position					
Feeding calves including tube feeding					
Understand the importance of feeding calves a consistent amount at regular intervals and the importance of introducing fibre into their diet					
Understand Kiwisaver, PAYE, employment agreement, banking procedures, credit and interest rates and hire purchase					
Can supervise relief milkers on day-to-day tasks					
Know how to record a near miss or accident					

## Step two

### Farm assistant and herd manager skills assessment

MATING – questions best completed in late January or early February					
Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise	No experience	Currently training – only complete fully supervised	Complete with supervision	Complete independently	Complete and supervise others
Identify the signs that a cow is on heat including; bulling, standing to be mounted, tail paint has been removed, or heat detector has been triggered					
Assist the artificial breeding technician when they are on farm					
Report and record cows on heat in the paddock and in the yard					
Understand the concept of mating including artificial breeding, natural breeding and interventions if they are used on your farm					
Coach junior staff members and know when to give feed back					
Starting to set career goals and know what your limitations are					
Understand the importance of building relationships with suppliers and rural professionals					

*Farm assistant and herd manager skills assessment*

<b>MILKING AND ENVIRONMENT</b> – questions best completed in late March or early April					
<b>Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise</b>	<b>No experience</b>	<b>Currently training – only complete fully supervised</b>	<b>Complete with supervision</b>	<b>Complete independently</b>	<b>Complete and supervise others</b>
Responsible for carrying out the day-to-day milking routine (setting dairy shed up, milking process and plant and vat wash)					
Carry out dairy maintenance including changing rubber ware under supervision					
Detect, draft and treat cows with mastitis					
Understand how the milking system works, so you can identify when things are not working correctly such as the milk pump					
Assist with drying cows off including administering dry cow therapy and teat sealing					
Shift the effluent irrigator correctly					
Understand that all water ways should be fenced off correctly and that fences are maintained and in the right position					
Understands cow flow within the dairy shed					



Step two

# Assistant manager, farm manager and operations manager skills assessment

## Skills assessment

To complete the assessment;

- Read the description for each task on farm
- Simply put a tick in the box that best represents your current skills and knowledge  
Be honest!

## Scoring

### Assistant manager

You could expect most of your scoring to be under the following headings;

Currently independently	Complete and supervise others
✓ (majority)	✓ (some)

### Farm manager

You could expect most of your scoring to be under the following headings;

Currently independently	Complete and supervise others
✓ (some)	✓ (majority)

### Operations manager

You could expect most of your scoring to be under the following headings;

Complete and supervise others	Develop policy to guide and inform others
✓ (some)	✓ (majority)

## Results

Use the results of the skills assessment to identify where you are fully competent at tasks and what level of expertise and skills you currently have, for each specific area of the farm business.

If you are not quite working at the right level, use the results to identify where you need more training and development. Once you have completed the relevant assessment bring it along to your career pathways catch-up to discuss the results with either your manager or farm owner.

# Step two

## Assistant manager, farm manager and operations manager skills assessment

FARM SYSTEMS – questions best completed in late June or early July						
Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise	No experience	Currently training – only complete fully supervised	Complete with supervision	Complete independently	Complete and supervise others	Develop policy to guide and inform others
Formulating, communicating and monitoring the animal welfare policy						
Ensure livestock are prepared for transport to the industry regulations and all documentation is correct and complete						
Monitor and analyse the destruction of livestock and ensure it is in line with both farm policy and industry regulations						
Identify periods of surplus and deficit feed and know how to manage these						
Create a feed budget, calculate grazing round length and monitor feed wedge						
Understand the nutritional value of different supplementary feeds and how they can be best utilised with the farm current feed system						
Involved with creating the farm business plan in conjunction with other key stakeholders						
Identify areas of operational improvement and implement the most beneficial option						



*Assistant manager, farm manager and operations manager skills assessment*

CALVING AND BUSINESS – questions best completed in late October or early November						
Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise	No experience	Currently training – only complete fully supervised	Complete with supervision	Complete independently	Complete and supervise others	Develop policy to guide and inform others
Implement a preventative animal health programme for common animal health issues including the vaccination for Lepto and Rotovirus						
Manage all calving difficulties and know limitations and when to call the vet						
Know when calf rearing is done well and calves are reared to the correct weight and condition						
Formulating and communicating calving and calf rearing policies and ensuring the appropriate number of replacement heifers are reared and in the correct condition.						
Budget cash flow including three year budget based on realistic pay-outs and costs						
Responsible for staff including creating rosters, allocating tasks and involved in staff planning and recruitment						
Responsible for farm performance including one-on-one performance reviews with staff						

## Step two

### Assistant manager, farm manager and operations manager skills assessment

MATING – questions best completed in late January or early February						
Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise	No experience	Currently training – only complete fully supervised	Complete with supervision	Complete independently	Complete and supervise others	Develop policy to guide and inform others
Implement mating plan and monitor targets and submission rates						
Understanding methods of breeding livestock and what programmes achieve the best genetic gain						
Co-ordinate with the breeding company and vets regarding mating requirements and when to implement synchronisations processes						
Effectively communicate values and goals of the business to inform staffing plans and rosters						
Network with other colleagues and groups in the dairy industry						
Understand employer obligations and know when to seek professional advice for things such as serious misconduct						
Ensuring that a best practice health and safety culture is modelled by all the team. This includes ensuring health and safety policies are relevant and that safety equipment is readily available						

*Assistant manager, farm manager and operations manager skills assessment*

<b>MILK AND ENVIRONMENT</b> – questions best completed in late March or early April						
<b>Score: ✓ to indicate your level of skill and expertise</b>	<b>No experience</b>	<b>Currently training – only complete fully supervised</b>	<b>Complete with supervision</b>	<b>Complete independently</b>	<b>Complete and supervise others</b>	<b>Develop policy to guide and inform others</b>
Able to trouble shoot and rectify problems in the milking shed						
Organising herd tests as per the farm policy						
Responsible for herd records and the quality of all information that is being recorded						
Monitor tanker docket and understand what the somatic cell count is						
Monitor the condition of the cows and dry off as to farm policy						
Set KPIs and milking targets						
Develop an on farm dairy effluent management plan						
Maintain lane ways or organising contractors to do the maintenance						
Responsible for all farm compliance requirements including making sure plans are implemented and monitored to keep up to date						

*Step three: discussing  
your career pathway*

# Career planning catch-up

Career catch-up meetings with either the farm owner or your manager are the perfect opportunity to discuss your career path and how you are tracking.

For employers it's a great chance to see how your employee is going and understand what you can do to help them progress their career, which in turn creates greater employee engagement.

Ask your employee to bring along a completed copy of the skills assessment relevant to the current time of year. Use the assessment to identify key areas in which they will need skills development in order to progress to meet the needs of the farm, or their own career goals.

The following questions provide a guideline for career conversations. Most importantly both employer and employee need a clear picture of what the employees career pathway looks like and how you can work together to help achieve it.

## **Suggested topics to discuss**

- Skill development
- Additional responsibilities
- Support available
- Mentoring.

## *What opportunities are there in the region to support your career?*

### **Suggested topics to discuss with your manager**

- Roles on other farms
- Identifying a good employer
- The next steps – ideal next role.

The career planning catch-up is not a discussion around performance. It's a unique opportunity for employers to informally catch-up with their employees, whilst gaining a better understanding of their personal goals and aspirations. For employees it is an opportunity to talk about how the farm can help them achieve their career pathway.

## Career planning catch-up worksheet

**FARM SYSTEMS** – ideal time to catch-up is June or July. Encourage your employee to complete the farm systems skills assessment first.

### Career vision

Where do you see yourself in the next 3-5 years?

What can we do to help you achieve your career goals?

### Where am I now?

What is your current role?

### Short term planning

What is your next role?

### Actions

Are there any tasks on farm that you are finding challenging?

Do you have a personal quality that you would like to improve?

### Learning and development

Is there an area of the farm business you want to spend more time working in?

Were there any areas in the assessment that you wanted to know more about?

Is there one specific task on farm that you want to focus on learning?

## Career planning catch-up worksheet

**CALVING AND BUSINESS** – ideal time to catch-up is October or November. Encourage your employee to complete the calving and business skills assessment first.

### Career vision

Over the last three months have you moved along your career path?

What needs to happen in the next three months to continue you along your career path?

### Where am I now?

What is your current role?

### Short term planning

What is your next role?

### Growth and learning

What is the most successful thing you have done or been involved in over the past three months?

What have you found most challenging over the past three months?

If you were to come across the same challenges again would you know how to resolve them?

Choose from the following two mating templates depending on how things are going in your role compared with expectations.

If your job satisfaction and performance feels on track work through the following:

### *Career planning catch-up worksheet*

**MATING** – ideal time to catch-up is January or February. Encourage your employee to complete the mating skills assessment first.

#### **Career vision**

What in the last three months has moved you further along your career path?

What needs to happen in the next 3 months for you to continue along your career path?

#### **Where am I now?**

What is your current role?

#### **Short term planning**

What is your next role?

#### **Actions**

Identify one area of the farm business where your expertise can be shared (either direct farm skills or skills developed off farm).

What is one personal quality I, as your employer, need to focus on improving?

#### **Learning and development**

Identify one area of the farm business you would like to learn more about

What is one personal quality (e.g. delegation, communication) you want to focus on improving in the next few months?



If your job satisfaction and performance could be improved work on the following:

## Career planning catch-up worksheet

**MATING** – ideal time to catch-up is January or February. Encourage your employee to complete the mating skills assessment first.

### Career vision

What expectations did you have for working here, that still need to be met?

What needs to happen over the next three months to get your career back on track?

### Where am I now?

What is your current role?

### Short term planning

What is your next role?

### Actions

What is stopping you from being successful and do you need to rectify it?

### Learning and development

What key skills and knowledge do you want to learn or continue to develop?

What goals do you have, which are yet to be achieved or started?

## Career planning catch-up worksheet

**Do you need to refocus on your career goals?** Use the following worksheet

**MILKING AND ENVIRONMENT** – ideal time to catch-up is March or April. Encourage your employee to complete the milking and environment skills assessment first.

### Career vision

What are your career goals for the coming 12 months?

What needs to happen next, to keep your career moving forward?

### Where am I now?

What is your current role?

### Short term planning

What is your next role?

### Actions

How have the past 12 months helped develop you as an employee?

What opportunities are there on this farm to help further develop your career?

### Learning and development

What didn't you learn enough about?

What have you learnt most about?

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