



**DairyNZ**

An Investment by New Zealand Dairy Farmers

dairy  
farming  
for a real  
change



→ **The New Zealand dairy industry needs smart self-starters who want to get into a rewarding and satisfying career.**

# OPPORTUNITIES IN DAIRYING

**Many people who choose to go dairy farming want to own their own farm one day. There is now a wide range of ownership and business sharing options.**

The recent trend to larger farms and larger herds means there are now more employment and career options for people who want to become dairy farmers.

Increasingly farmers recognise the need to have skilled people who want to learn the business. As a result the pay and conditions are very competitive.

Career progression in the dairy industry helps people to develop their knowledge and skills to gain increasing responsibility. In some cases this will require people to shift farms although many large operations now allow career progression within the same business.

Dairy farming is a highly skilled business. Many of the skills are learned on-the-job and through industry organised discussion groups, farm consultants and company representatives.

National certificates, diplomas and other tertiary qualifications will be a valuable asset for anyone pursuing a career in the industry.

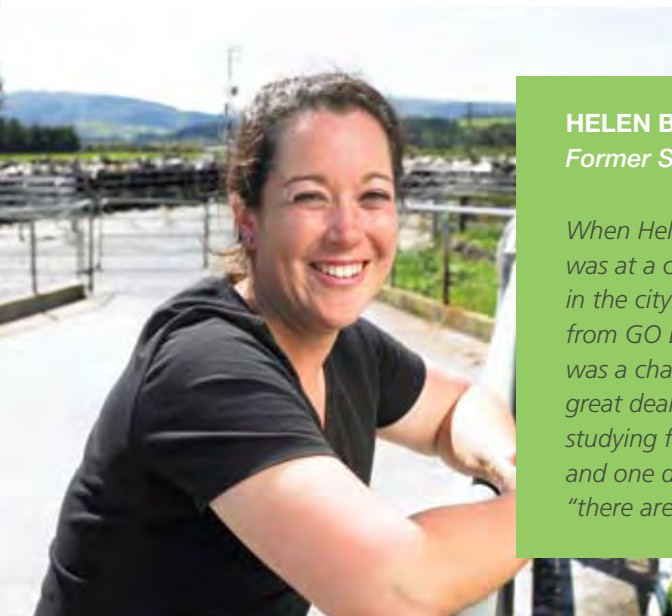
While many people who choose to go dairy farming want to own their own farm one day, there are now many opportunities for career progression and participation in the business.

As you gain in experience and knowledge, opportunities are more likely to arise for equity participation where you can own part or all of a dairy herd or land. Sharemilking provides opportunities to participate in the returns of one or more farms.

Who knows what the future will hold once you are on your way? With some experience in the industry you will get a clearer understanding of the opportunities it offers and plan your progression accordingly.

The dairy farming roles outlined are legitimate career options to get you underway. It is up to each individual to identify a role that suits them and their skill level.

Progression through the levels can be relatively quick for those who are prepared to demonstrate their commitment and ability to learn.



**HELEN BOND, EKETAHUNA**  
*Former Software Trainer*

*When Helen called 0800 GO DAIRY in the summer of 2005 she was at a crossroads. She'd been working up to 80 hours a week in the city and had had enough. The support and advice she got from GO DAIRY clinched it. Her first dairy farm job in Eketahuna was a challenge. She was thrown in the deep end and learned a great deal. Now she's second in charge on the farm next door, studying for a diploma and planning to become a sharemilker and one day, a farm owner. She loves doing "real" work, saying "there are no office politics out here."*

# how to get started

**MARK HODDER, CAMBRIDGE**  
*Former baker and courier driver*

*"It's never too late to give it a go," says Mark, who's loving farming. Every day is different and Mark loves the fact that he has to be a carpenter, a plumber and a mechanic to get things done. "People should give it a go," he says. "It's only a year out of your life to see whether or not you like it. The best thing is in the morning after the milking - the bacon and eggs never tasted so good and it's only a two minute walk from the shed."*



**Find out if dairy farming is for you. Your starting point in dairy farming will depend on your knowledge of dairying, skill level and amount of equity. The following steps can be used as a guide.**

Talk to friends and other people who know the dairy industry. Gather as much information as possible about dairy farming and what your expectations should be. Ask them about the type of work they do, their hours and their rewards.

If you can it's also a good idea to spend a day or a week on a farm to get to know whether being a dairy farmer is really for you.

There is considerable help and support available in the industry, so don't be afraid to ask.  
**Check out [www.godairy.co.nz](http://www.godairy.co.nz) as a first step.**

There are opportunities on dairy farms throughout the country. The type of position you apply for will depend on your knowledge and skill levels and the experience you can bring to the job. Previous experience does not need to be in dairy farming. It could be anything from mechanical skills to management, engineering to electronics. If you are motivated, positive and willing to learn you will quickly grasp the basics.

The New Zealand dairy season begins on 1 June each year so most farm employment vacancies are advertised in the lead up to the start of the season from December to May.

Finding a job can be as simple as responding to an advertisement in the newspaper under Farm Vacancies.

The website [www.fencepost.com](http://www.fencepost.com) has a section listing farm employment opportunities.

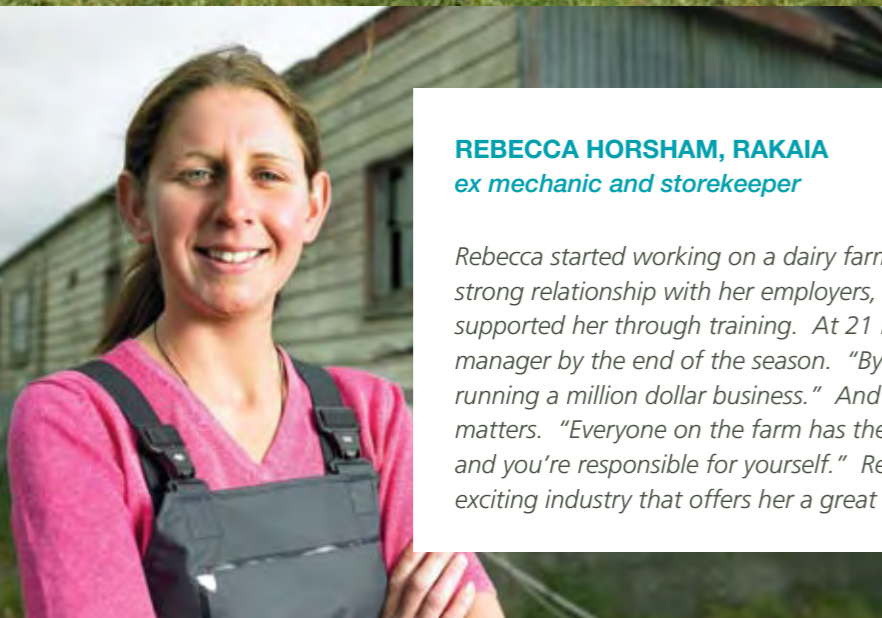
You may also consider contacting a specialist rural recruitment company to discuss the type of position you would like.

If you have experience and some equity you may consider sharemilking or some other type of equity opportunity.

Once you have decided to join the dairy industry it's a good idea to increase your skills and future employment prospects with on-the-job training and National Certificate courses which are available through AgricultureITO and other organisations. You can also undertake training before entering the industry to help influence your starting point and progress your dairying career.

**REBECCA HORSHAM, RAKAIA**  
*ex mechanic and storekeeper*

*Rebecca started working on a dairy farm a year ago. She's built a strong relationship with her employers, Rachel and Hayden, who have supported her through training. At 21 Rebecca wants to be a herd manager by the end of the season. "By the time I'm 30 I could be running a million dollar business." And Rebecca knows that her job matters. "Everyone on the farm has their role, you're not just a number and you're responsible for yourself." Rebecca believes she's part of an exciting industry that offers her a great future and a lot of support.*



## BUILDING YOUR FUTURE

**Successful dairy farmers, like any successful career people, are prepared to put the effort into their job.**

For people with the commitment and desire to succeed, a career in dairy farming is an option which can be extremely satisfying, enjoyable and financially rewarding. Your entry point into this career pathway will depend on your experience and background.

A typical dairy season starts around July/September with spring calving. This is a busy and exciting time of the year. Days start early when farmers rise to check the calving paddocks and get the morning milking underway. There's time to go home for breakfast and see the children off to school before feeding calves and then checking cows who are yet to give birth. Looking after the welfare of the farm's livestock is vital at this time of year. Working outdoors, and with animals, is part of dairying that many farmers enjoy the most.

From October to December is peak milk production on the farm. Most farms milk twice a day at around 5am and 3pm. The timing of milking will vary from farm to farm. Keeping the milking equipment up to scratch and maintaining a hygienic farm dairy is critical.

After all, it is a food factory and its milk may end up in some far flung corner of the world. This is also the time of year for mating cows to calve next spring.

As you gain experience in herd management and milk production you will need to understand the genetic options available to achieve the health, reproductive and milk component characteristics you want your herd to have in the future. Processing surplus grass into silage or hay is done now and special forage crops such as maize or turnips are planted for harvesting later in the season.

From April to May the herd gradually finishes milking for the season. Milking stops until the cows calve again to begin the new season in July/August. This time is often used to tackle major projects on the farm such as fencing, drainage, water reticulation, shed maintenance and tree planting. It is also the time of year for planning ahead for next season. Almost all farms have budgets for feed production, milk production and financial performance.

As farms become larger and more sophisticated, many business operations employ a range of high-technology systems to help in decision-making, budgeting and overall productivity. These are used for virtually all aspects of farm management including weather stations, soil testing, pasture analysis, feed management, animal management and many other farm performance indicators.

### STEPHEN AND ANDREA BRACEY, TAHUNA

*Former engineer and personal trainer*

*Five years ago, Stephen and Andrea decided to change their lives and escape from the city. Stephen got a job as herd manager on a dairy farm in Waipu while Andrea worked as a personal trainer with the occasional stint as a relief milker. "Many things are more important than money - like happiness," says Stephen. In June this year they both moved from Waipu to a sharemilking position near Tahuna in the Waikato. They now own 250 cows.*

# key facts

## Working on a dairy farm means being part of New Zealand's number one export industry.

Because it is mostly cooperatively owned by dairy farm owners the dairy industry is the All Blacks of the New Zealand economy - a team working together to take on the rest of the world.

There are many career options and pathways to suit a range of lifestyles and ambitions.

For people who are prepared to learn new skills a career in dairy farming offers a great lifestyle, career and personal opportunities.

## The New Zealand Dairy Industry

- » The agricultural industry employs an estimated 11.4% of the New Zealand workforce. This includes around 66,000 people employed on sheep, beef and dairy farms.
- » Over the past 15 years growth has been significant in the dairy sector, which is considered to be more profitable than other land-use options.
- » There are about 17,000 dairy farmers including farm owners and sharemilkers.

- » There are over 11,800 dairy herds with a total of nearly 4 million cows.
- » Since the year 2000 the amount of land used for dairy farming has increased from 1,330,000 ha to 1,410,000 ha.
- » The number of farms is decreasing while the size of both dairy farms and dairy herds is increasing.
- » In 1990 the average herd size was 160 cows, today it is 322 cows.
- » Generally the largest farms and herds are in the South Island where there has been the most growth in dairy farming over the past ten years.
- » Total milk production has increased from nearly 13 billion litres in 2000 to over 14.7 billion litres in 2006.
- » 95% of all milk produced is processed for export.
- » New Zealand's largest dairy company, Fonterra, earns about 20% of the country's total export income.

*These figures are sourced mainly from the industry publication Dairy Statistics 2005 - 2006.*

**ROB AND BEVERLEY URQUHART, REPOROA**  
*Former owner truck driver/operators*

Two years ago Rob called 0800 GO DAIRY. Today Rob, Beverley and their daughter Maddie live and work on a large dairy farm near Reporoa. Both Rob and Beverley are gaining further qualifications through AgITO.

*"After we called the 0800 number we were walked through the various steps that were needed to make the move," says Rob. "Our client manager was incredibly helpful and we just kept going until we got a position that really suited us."*



**FARM ASSISTANT**

This entry level role is about following directions and learning the basic skills. Unless you come from a farming background this is the start line for a career in the dairy industry. It allows an employee to be exposed to most tasks conducted on a dairy farm. Do not confuse this with a milk harvester role which is limited to milking duties.

**HERD MANAGER**

Typically after one to two years you should be ready for this role. This role requires employees to demonstrate a strong understanding of the basic skills (e.g. milking, feeding and health of stock) and display a willingness to accept responsibility for the cows as well as the other tasks under their control.

**FARM MANAGER**  
**SENIOR HERD MANAGER (large farm)**

Competence in the basic skills is required to be a successful farm manager. This includes having a clear understanding of the seasonal timing of the tasks and duties. This role has responsibility for the farm's physical operations. It may also include supervisory responsibility for staff who are generally taken on as one employee for every 200 cows.

**OPERATIONS MANAGER**

This role requires the ability to develop and implement the farm's annual plan which will include both the financial and physical performance. This role has full responsibility for staff, including recruitment.

**CONTRACT MILKER**

This is a self-employed role where the contractor is paid based on the quantity of milk produced (e.g. 80 cents per kilogram of milksolids). They are responsible for some expenditure under their control (e.g. staffing) and supply some plant (e.g. motorbikes). Their responsibilities generally sit between the farm manager and operations manager levels.

**VARIABLE ORDER SHAREMILKER**

This is a self-employed role where the contractor receives a percentage of the milk income (e.g. 29%). They are responsible for some expenditure under their control (e.g. staffing) and supply some plant (e.g. motorbikes). Their responsibilities generally sit between the farm manager and operations manager levels.

**50/50 SHAREMILKER**

This is a self-employed role where the contractor receives a percentage of the milk income (e.g. 50%) and generally all the stock income. They are responsible for clearly defined areas of expenditure (e.g. all costs relating to stock) and they own and supply the cows and plant (e.g. machinery and tools).

**EQUITY MANAGER AND FARM OWNER**

These roles both have a financial investment in the business and therefore input into all aspects of the business operation.

# CHOOSE IT FOR LIFESTYLE...

Lifestyle is what most people who have become dairy farmers rate most highly. They can spend time with their families, be their own boss, enjoy the outdoors, get involved in the local schools and sports clubs, meet other farmers and suppliers and have endless variety in their lives without the hassles of city life.

But people who have made the change also have other ambitions. They can see what other people have achieved and are inspired by them. Many dairy farmers today are highly successful people who are financially secure with future prospects that will reward them and their families well for their years of hard work.

A career in dairy farming gives you lots of ways to get ahead and build your wealth through equity, higher paid positions or both. If you want to work towards farm ownership that is one way. However there are many successful dairy farmers who are sharemilkers or employees with full management responsibilities on large dairy farms.

Check it out.

**For more information:**  
[www.dairynz.co.nz/godairy](http://www.dairynz.co.nz/godairy)  
**0800 GO DAIRY**  
**txt INFO to 4920**

