Employee engagement

Employee engagement is about having staff that are committed to and enthusiastic about their jobs and the business.

Research suggests that only a third of employees in the general workforce are actively engaged in their work. Great employers have a much higher percentage of engaged employees (up to 75%). Engaged employees believe that their contribution makes a difference and will invest extra time and effort into making the business a success. Engaged employees are more productive, they are less likely to have accidents and more likely to stay with their employer.

An engaged employee would clearly be an asset to your farm!

How can I engage my employees?

The following have been identified as key ‘drivers’ of employee engagement:

- Clear expectations about the job
- Opportunities for career progression
- Opportunities to grow and develop
- Regular feedback and dialogue with the employer
- High quality relationships with workmates and managers
- Believing in what the business is trying to achieve
- Effective communication about ‘what’s going on’
- Recognition and reward for going the extra mile
- Interesting and meaningful work
- Autonomy and ability to make decisions about one’s own work
- Effective leadership
- Work-life balance
Where do I start?

- **Introduce weekly farm staff meetings.** Meetings are very helpful for communicating important information, finding what’s happening, seeking employees’ ideas and fostering a positive team culture.

- **Review your rostering system.** How many hours are people working on average a week? How many days off do they have? Talk to staff about how the roster works for them and how they feel about their work-life balance. Great employers will aim for a maximum average of 45 working hours per week and a minimum of 3 days off every fortnight.

- **Introduce a performance management system.** Ensure that employees have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and the skills, knowledge and support needed to achieve these expectations. The most successful systems are simple ones – ongoing coaching and mentoring, frequent “10 minute chats”, monthly catch-ups and formal review meetings once or twice a year.

- **Invest in training and development.** Coaching, mentoring and on-the-job training are one of the most effective methods of developing your people. Take the time to share your experiences and insights, match new staff with a buddy, and encourage all employees to attend relevant farm discussion groups. Budget for external courses and formal qualifications, they are well worth it in terms of staff productivity and retention.

- **Involve your staff.** Ask their opinions, listen to their ideas. Their participation is essential for creating a positive workplace culture.

- **Recognise and reward staff for a job well done.** Make a special effort to reward those who go the extra mile.

- **Consider how people’s jobs can be made more interesting.** Daily tasks on the farm are not always interesting or exciting. Try to provide as much variety as possible e.g. job rotation. Give people freedom to organise their own workload and tasks. Foster a positive team culture through shared meals and social activities outside work.