Developing a code of conduct for your farm

Developing a code of conduct is a proactive step you can take to clarify expectations around behaviour on the farm and create a positive workplace culture. It’s also a useful tool for dealing with misconduct, as it provides clarity on what’s considered unacceptable behaviour.

Involving your employees in developing the code of conduct. They will often have lots of ideas about the behaviours they believe are appropriate around the farm and how they can be encouraged.

A code of conduct generally contains all, or many, of the following:

- A commitment to a positive workplace culture and why this is important,
- The expectation that people will meet their obligations under the law,
- The expectation that people will keep business information confidential (e.g. financial information about the farm),
- Expectations around behaviour on the farm, and
- Examples of unacceptable behaviour.

Expectations around behaviour on farm:

Sit down with your employees and brainstorm the kind of workplace you all want to be part of. Work out the key behaviours that everyone needs to demonstrate on a daily basis to make this happen.

Possible behaviours may include:

- Honest and open communication,
- Treating others with respect and understanding,
- Doing our job well,
- Being committed to safe work practices,
- Resolving problems promptly,
- Showing up on time,
- Chipping in when needed,
- Taking care of property and equipment, and
- Respecting and caring for stock.
Examples of unacceptable behaviour:

Give examples of unacceptable behaviour. This helps define what ‘misconduct’ and ‘serious misconduct’ mean in your workplace. Again work closely with your employees, as their participation and buy-in is vital.

**Misconduct:**

Misconduct covers any form of wrongdoing. A one-off offence may be dealt with informally, however repeated offences may result in disciplinary action. Common examples include: being late to work, being careless or negligent, using offensive language, being rude to others, less serious breaches of health and safety, using the work ute for private business without permission etc.

**Serious misconduct:**

These offences are very serious in nature and may even involve breaking the law. Common examples include: theft, assault, bullying, harassment, serious breaches of health and safety, using drugs or alcohol at work, wilfully damaging property and equipment etc. Make it clear that this list of unacceptable behaviour is not definitive but rather a general guide.