Developing your people through training

What is the role of training in my business?

Training grows the skills and knowledge of everyone and makes a huge contribution to your business success. It is also an important part of motivating staff, so it gives you the extra benefits of staff that are not just highly competent but also have job satisfaction. This in turn reduces staff turnover.

What sort of training should I provide?

- Task training: This is the training required to ensure people can do their job well and safely. It includes training in using vehicles and machinery, handling livestock and health and safety.
- Developmental training: This is mainly training for personal growth, but it also helps ensure your staff work well as a team and develop their own confidence. It could include training in communication skills, delegation and time management. Younger people may benefit from training in household management skills, such as budgeting and cooking, and you will benefit from their being less stressed and more focused on their work.
- Your own training: Don’t forget your own training to keep yourself up to date with new tools or techniques and to further develop your leadership and communication skills.

Who should provide the training?

Think about who is the best provider in each case. A lot of task training can be done on the farm by you or by experienced staff. Make sure that whoever does the training is not just technically competent but also knows how to train. There are “train the trainer” courses available for this – look in the Yellow Pages or on the internet for providers.

Off the farm training is provided by many organisations. For example, AgITO provides subsidised agricultural training that is set up to work around busy times on the farm.

There are many other one-day options such as inter-farm seminars, vet courses and field days which will develop new skills and knowledge as well as being very motivational.
You can also seek out providers for training in communications skills, leadership training and even courses like Outward Bound to develop yourself and your staff.

Tips for encouraging learning:

- Most people want to learn, but they can be held back by a lack of confidence and fear of seeming incompetent.
- Make it clear right from the time of recruitment that training is important on your farm and you expect everyone to actively participate.
- If people show reluctance, start with small steps to encourage the learning of new skills. Make sure each step is achievable and recognise each success. Positive learning experiences will build confidence and a willingness to learn more.