

FARM STAFF ROSTERS - QUICKLY AND EASILY

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Key points

1. Use tools available to you to minimise the time spent creating your rosters.
2. Rostering is a puzzle; ever changing and different for each farm. Take time to unpick the individual parts of your puzzle, consider options for how they can be addressed.
3. Your solutions should consider both the needs of the business and the employee. The Sustainable Dairying Workplace Action Plan and The DairyNZ Roster Builder will help guide your decisions and test your solutions quickly.
4. Rostering is a journey; aim to be steadily improving and tailoring your roster depending on workload, employees and business requirements.

Successful rostering ensures you get the very best from your employees every day. This means keeping them motivated and energised and setting up your employees to be part of the solution and not the source of the problem. Achieving this, of course, isn't always straight forward. Where people are involved, things are rarely simple. Our learning as managers or leaders of people is an ongoing journey; as our knowledge, skills and comfort in this arena improve so should the effectiveness of our roster.

When developing the DairyNZ Roster Builder and talking with farmers about rosters, I have repeatedly referred to a study of munitions factory workers during WW1 (Ref: Great Britain. Ministry of Munitions, Health of Muniton Workers Committee, Interim report. Industrial efficiency and fatigue. London, 1917.)

In summary, and of no great surprise, the report shows that as people work longer hours, their fatigue levels increase and their productivity drops. What I find most telling about this research is that there is no question that these factory workers (mainly women) were motivated to work as hard as they could. They had husbands, sons, or relatives fighting for their lives overseas. For them to have the very best chance of returning alive, these women needed to manufacture as much ammunition as possible.

Notes:

Yet, productivity dropped at anything over 50 hours per week. At its extreme end, the study found that overall output at 70 hours per week differed very little from output at 56 hours. There was little to no value gained from the additional 14 hours of work.

With this in mind, is it surprising that we see a diminished output and motivation from our employees who are working longer hours? Is it better to plan rosters where employees rarely work more than 50 hours a week?

The perfect roster takes time and experience to develop, but the time spent creating rosters can be reduced with tools, like the DairyNZ Roster Builder, so that there is more time to consider small and iterative changes to your roster to improve it.

The Sustainable Dairying: Workplace Action Plan

The Sustainable Dairying: Workplace Action Plan is an industry action plan developed by DairyNZ and Federated Farmers to assist dairy farming businesses in adopting good workplace management practices.

The plan describes what a quality work environment in the dairy industry might look like and sets out the coordinated actions and commitments of the industry. It also provides practical advice and support to employers and employees.

Why do we need a Workplace Action Plan?

The benefits of a quality workplace are considerable. Good work environments will help attract and retain the motivated and talented people that we need in our industry. Good work environments are productive, rewarding, safe and enjoyable for all people on farm – employers and employees. Good work environments mean you can reap the rewards in the good times and help each other during the tough ones.

DairyNZ and Federated Farmers are clear that it is people who will drive our dairy business success – economic, environmental and social.

The five pillars of good people management



The Workplace Action Plan is built on the five pillars of good people management. Your workplace must comply with the law; however, if you want people to stay, grow and contribute then you need quality work environments which motivate and reward people fairly. You need to do more than the basics. Developing a plan to improve your farm's performance in the five pillars of good people management is a great start.

Good employers try to ensure that, on their farms, there are/is:

- Enough people with the right skills to ensure workloads are achievable in the allocated time
- A variety of tasks offering both physical and mental challenges
- Motivating and enjoyable work that avoids fatigue
- Sufficient flexibility to support an overall work/life balance
- Staff working on a well-designed roster normally:
 - Are not likely to exceed 50 hours a week

Notes:

- Are not likely to work more than 10 hours a day
- Are not likely to exceed 4 hours in any day before a break is taken
- Have regular days off, set by the roster system and within the employment agreement
- Have at least two consecutive days off.

Tips for creating great rosters

Building a good roster allows your team to be energised and motivated at work. It also gives you piece of mind that you have the right number of hands on deck for whatever is going on at the time. Creating a roster to provide a healthy workplace and attract great staff takes some consideration, and the following points may be of assistance to you:

1. Determine what jobs you need/want to get done and how many people are needed to complete them:
 - a. Map how you/the team currently spend your time (use timesheets and write in a bit more detail about how long jobs are taking).
 - b. List **critical farm jobs** and how long the average person takes to complete them to work out what a day would look like.
 - c. Build in time for team meetings, planning, training and managing.
 - d. List **seasonal tasks** that fall within the roster period and estimate how long they will take (consider using an A3 planner).
 - e. List jobs you would **like** to be completed and how long they would take per day.
2. Work out the availability for each team member and consider what will give each a good work/life balance:
 - a. Make note of any days that people are not available (working other jobs, childcare commitments etc.).
 - b. What minimum and maximum hours do you want to offer in a week?
 - c. Ask your team about any outside of work commitments they have that are important to them, so that you can try to accommodate these (e.g. sports, church).
 - d. Look at your current staffing numbers - is it possible to increase numbers or bring on casuals if required?
3. Consider how you could overcome some of your system constraints:
 - a. Highlight any jobs that only one person is skilled/trained to do
 - i. Can you up-skill someone else?
 - b. If certain jobs take a long time and/or a lot of staff to complete, e.g. milking, consider other efficiencies or technologies that could speed this up, e.g. automatic cup removers. Ask for staff input.
 - c. Is using contractors an option for some jobs?
 - d. Review your staff budget – what changes can you make? If you improve your roster, what other areas of the farm are likely to improve?

4. Review and select some rotations/shift patterns that might suit your farm:
 - a. Decide on two or three different rotations that might work for your business and staff (a rotation is the days on and off someone works e.g. 11/3 or 5/2).
 - b. Ensuring staff have regular days off each week will limit your options as your rotation will need to be devisable by 7.
 - c. Look around at farms of similar size and set-up - what rotations are they using and why?
 - d. Use the DairyNZ Roster builder to test your ideas (www.dairynz.co.nz/rosterbuilder).
5. Draft up some rosters and consider the pros and cons of each roster:
 - a. Using a calendar, scrap paper, Excel or the DairyNZ Roster Builder, draft up what these rotations might look like over a one or two month period.
 - b. Decide how you want a handover/change of team to work.
 - c. Remember to include all management staff (that includes you) in the roster so you get planned time off.
 - d. Try rotations where team members start on different days.
 - e. Check if there are any additional costs, and if these are able to be funded.
 - f. Ask staff what they think of your favoured option(s).
6. Communicate:
 - f. Give people plenty of advance notice of the new roster.
 - g. Consider making it a trial for a month so team members feel they can still have input if it's not working well for them.
 - h. Make sure the roster is visible to all team members so all know who is doing what and when.
7. Review the roster:
 - a. After a month or so check with the team that the roster is working out for them.
 - b. Make any tweaks that could make it better.
 - c. Review timesheets; checking hours budgeted against hours worked will help you further refine your roster.

Find more info at www.Dairynz.co.nz/people.

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