



FARM WORKERS

AIM: TO PROVIDE FARMERS WITH SUPPORT TO FIND AND KEEP GOOD WORKERS.

1. The importance of good labour

- **FEED** and **HIRED LABOUR** are two main costs for dairy farmers.
- Hiring labour allows farmers to concentrate on other things, including income generating activities, e.g. job off farm
- However, if farm workers are not well managed or carrying out their duties effectively, they can affect the potential profitability of a farm.
- Changing workers can be upsetting for animals and time consuming for farmers, e.g. new workers need re-training.

2. How do you find and keep a good farm worker?

1. Before hiring a worker write down a list of tasks you would like them to do, e.g.
 - Milk animals;
 - Feed animals;
 - Look after new born calves;
 - Take milk to the MCC;
 - Complete cow records;
 - Prepare fields, tend, plant and harvest crops;
 - Make feeds, e.g. silage; hay; home-made concentrates;
 - Build and repair farm structures (e.g. milking parlour, fencing, etc).
2. Look at the list and write down the skills and any experience they need to carry out the tasks you identified above, e.g.
 - Physically fit (farm work can be physically demanding);
 - Able to follow instructions (will instructions be written or verbal?);
 - Can read and write, if they need to fill out records;
 - Honest (do they need to buy things? Transport milk to the MCC?);
 - Previous experience with dairy animals?
3. Try to find a person who meets your requirements. If you find someone, ask for references from previous employers.
4. If you find someone suitable, put them on a trial period of 3 months on a fair wage. Monitor their performance and then if they do a good job, agree a fair package for them.

Empathy and **good stockmanship** are very important. Good dairy workers need to be able to anticipate and recognise the needs of animals. E.g. are animals sick, thirsty in pain? **Being kind** to animals and respecting their welfare makes them more relaxed, less stressed and better producers.



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REMEMBER farm workers need enough money to live. If you pay or treat them poorly, they may look for another job or other ways to add to their income, e.g. stealing milk or other items, adding water to milk.

Workers are more likely to stay somewhere where they are treated well. What benefits could you give to supplement their salary, e.g.

- ✓ Produce from your farm? (Eggs? Vegetables? Milk?)
- ✓ Portion of land which they can use to cultivate their own crops?
- ✓ Bull calf to care for and sell?
- ✓ Bonus if they have worked well, e.g. bag of maize / mealie meal?
- ✓ Opportunity to learn useful skills, e.g. going to training / field days?
- ✓ Wage increases after a certain time?

3. How to you ensure a farm worker is doing a good job?

- **COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL.** Be clear about your expectations. Let the farm worker know when they have done a good job. If they could do better, then tell them why you think that and how they could do the task differently next time.
- Give any new worker a one-week **orientation** to your farm.
- Provide the worker with a **list of daily tasks**. Be specific about important things they should do. Make sure they know how to do each task. e.g.
 - Prepare milking parlour (should be clean with feed in trough);
 - Milk animals (clean teats, check for mastitis; milk; apply teat salve; teat dip; let out into kraal);
 - Take milk to MCC;
- **Monitor** how the worker does tasks and give constructive feedback;
- Review **records / stock control**, e.g.
 - if you have two cows that should each get 4 kg of maize bran per day, a 50kg bag should last 6 days. Check your maize bran stock after 6 days to see if 1 bag has been finished;
- Make sure the worker has the **opportunity to tell you** if they are facing problems. Be prepared to **listen** and work together to find solutions.
- If you're expecting the worker to phone you, then provide them with some talktime, e.g. ZMW 20 per month.
- Provide **training opportunities**, or if you attend a training course, then make sure you **share what you learnt** with your worker.
- Find out **what your worker is interested in learning** and see if this can be incorporated into their role.

The ZDTP is focused on supporting dairy farmers to improve their productivity, milk quality and linkages to urban markets. The views expressed in this publication are those of the implementers of the programme and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government. For further information, please contact ZDTP Country Manager Tania Thomson on tania@primeconsultants.net or +260 96 456 4206