

Dairy staff recruitment tips & tricks

*It's staff recruitment time for dairy farmers across the country. A well-planned recruitment and selection process is crucial to finding the right people for your team. Our consultant **Rachel Durie** offers up a few tips and tricks to help you find the right candidates.*

Start Early

This is especially true if you're looking for a new contract milker or sharemilker. If you've got a position on a large farm (600+ cows), you'd ideally want to start before Christmas. But for smaller units, February/March is still a good time.

In general, the longer you leave it, the smaller the pool gets and the less 'A grade' candidates there are to choose from.

If you're recruiting for a new farm manager or 2IC, start advertising early in the year if you want to attract the cream of the crop.

Farm assistants and herd managers typically won't know whether they're staying or looking for a new job until their employers (often contract milkers) know if they're moving to a new job or not. So, you still have time to recruit someone new.

Advertise in the right place

FarmSource is a good place to advertise and is where most people look. Think about how you can make your ad stand out from the crowd. What makes your farm business appealing? Why should someone work for you?

Putting the word out on social media and leveraging your own farming networks can also be a great way to find the right person.

Interview by phone & check referees

Narrow down your pool of applicants before showing them around your farm by completing a phone interview and doing reference checks. You should chat to at least TWO previous employers (not friends!).

Ask referees plenty of verification questions, such as the role the applicant had, the farm address, when they were employed, what the farm contour is like etc. That way, you know you are talking to a legitimate employer. Applicants should include these specific details in their CV.

Don't be put off by bad spelling

Things like bad spelling and grammar in a CV can be off-putting. But don't write off applicants just based on their CV alone. If it looks like they have good previous experience, the right attitude, solid know-how and want to upskill, they may still be suitable. Give them a call.

No luck? Re-advertise!

If you don't find anyone suitable from your first recruitment drive, re-advertise. New people are likely to now be available.

Know your farm numbers

Make sure you have a good idea of what the budget looks like from a contract milker or sharemilker's perspective. Is the rate you're offering fair? Will it attract good candidates?

Do an on-farm visit

If you're recruiting for a contract milker or sharemilker and you're having trouble deciding between the last couple of applicants, ask to visit the farm they are on. This will give you a good idea of how they operate and see first-hand their pasture management skills, feeding regime, level of farm maintenance and general tidiness.

Written questions

For any management level positions, it is worth providing a technical questionnaire to find out what their skill level is. This may include working out feeding allocations and grazing rounds.

You could also ask them to provide comments on how to achieve set farm objectives (e.g. low SCC or compact calving) and indications of how they would remunerate staff. While this won't necessarily determine who you employ, it may indicate areas where your successful candidate may need further guidance.

If you want to talk through recruitment and selection ideas for your farm, give Rachel Durie a call on **027 847 8232**.