

Farm Teams & High Performance

How To Keep Good Staff & Be The Leader They Need:

9 Practical Tips For NZ Farmers





Hello from Rural Coach

At Rural Coach, **our vision** is one where confident farmers can achieve their dreams. **Our mission** is to support farmers to have purposeful, values-based and authentic conversations that are safe and inclusive for everyone involved, so that meaningful plans can be made and acted upon with complete confidence that everyone is on board.

One of the ways we help build the confidence of New Zealand Farmers is to support their shift into people leadership. It is no accident that high performing businesses report having strong leadership and a vibrant team culture where the whole team understand how they contribute and how much they are valued.

We know this work in (Leadership & People) development is critically important because staff don't leave jobs, they leave people. If you are a farm owner or if you've stepped into a management role (or you're about to), then this book is for you. Strong leadership and a great team culture are possible and we believe that anyone can do it, when they know how.

Enjoy!

Who are we?

At Rural Coach, we are rural New Zealanders just like you. Our core focus is creating safe environments for personal and professional learning and development. With our support, you can have the future-focused conversations that matter and bring everyone in your family or business along with you.



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The ability to work productively alongside the team is critical to the success of most New Zealand farms. But it can be easier said than done.

In fact, one of the most common frustrations we hear from farmers is how to attract and keep good staff, and how to get everyone to all pull together in the same direction on a daily basis.

So why is it so hard?

From our perspective, there are two key challenges at play.

The first factor is that farmers believe pay is the key lever for people to stay. Yet, national and international research shows that money is only part of the reason for people to stick with you. There's so much more to it, starting with ensuring your team feel valued, seen and heard.

The second is that most farmers are not trained in how to lead people and so there's a huge gap between best practice and what is happening on farms. Farmers are excellent at managing stock and growing grass, but people leadership is a whole new ball game which doesn't come naturally to many.

To help you improve your performance as an employer and retain your people, we have collated nine of the most important practices for successful leadership, with a list of some helpful and practical tools, techniques and steps to follow.

If you want to know more, then please contact us. We provide confidential one-on-one and group leadership training (either short or long term), team training and rural leadership courses across heartland New Zealand.

1

It Starts With You, Know Your Values – The ‘Why’

As the head of your farm team, your leadership skills will play a significant role in your farm's business performance and ability to keep staff.

Thinking of yourself as both a leader AND a farmer/manager may be new to you. But the reality is management and leadership are two different things. A manager tends to focus on tasks and results while a leader prioritises people, builds relationships and inspires.

If you've never been in a leadership role before (or never considered it as part of what you do), a great

place to start is to consider your values and what matters to you.

Your values shape your vision and strategy, they drive your behaviour, and they define success or failure for you. They also explain why you respond to certain situations the way you do, which can be hugely insightful should you wish to check or moderate your behaviour. For example, if you find yourself short-fused at certain behaviours, it's probably related to what you do or don't value. Finding positive ways to articulate these values to others, will help you lead with purpose.



“To lead from the front, you need to know what you stand for, in other words, what are your values. The good thing with values and strengths-based assessments is that they don't take long, plus there are no right or wrong answers, and the information gleaned can be invaluable in learning what makes you tick and how you can work best with others.”

Scott Neeley - Coach



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Know Where You're Going



If you want your team to join you on your journey, you must provide clarity of purpose, clear direction and be able to share this story.

To achieve this, it's important to think about your farm and the vision, purpose and goals you have.

Ask yourself if you can easily articulate and share them with others? If not, you run the risk of moving in the wrong direction and it is harder for your staff to join you on your journey, as they don't have a 'road map' and they don't know what you are striving for.

Our advice is to invest the time you need to really think about the

farm's future, and then assess what needs to happen to progress.

This doesn't mean that you have to have all of the answers. In fact, quite the opposite. Staff are hungry for this type of challenge, wanting to understand your vision and then join you in developing plans on 'HOW' to achieve your aspirations. With everyone on board, you can set and review shorter term targets, adapt where necessary and celebrate success together.



“What we've seen is that when farmers share information on where they want to go, then people become engaged and feel valued for their input. They become vested or INVESTED in the farm's outputs and outcomes and develop ownership for its business objectives and achievements.”

Brett Robinson - Coach



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“This Is How We Work Around Here” – The ‘How’

It's been said that culture beats talent all day long, whether that be at work, in a club or on a sports field. What this means for farmers is that a positive working environment will help attract and keep staff, particularly those who are purpose based and values aligned. Strong organisational culture also reduces the cost of attracting and hiring new staff – the good ones tend to stick around because they are happy in their work and feel valued.

A positive culture doesn't happen by default, nor is it a 'one and done' exercise. It requires regular attention so it's important to have a shared understanding with your team about 'how we work around here'.

To start, we recommend a team meeting where everyone gets to have their say. Start by asking questions like “how are we going to work together?”, “what do we need from each other to succeed?” and “how do we want it to feel to work here?” As decisions are reached, make sure they are written down for future reference.

Finally, how are we going to hold each other accountable to 'how we work around here?' Consider agreeing on a phrase e.g. “your zip's down” to call out any misalignment to team culture. This makes it easier to provide feedback. How you respond to feedback will demonstrate your commitment to a positive team culture.



“Once you have the agreement in place, draft up a poster or one pager that everyone signs. Keep this live by regularly referring to it e.g. when giving feedback or celebrating ‘wins’ or discussing ‘opportunities’ for improvement. Also include it in your Induction Process, so that any new staff know the team expectations from day one.”

Sarah Barr - Coach



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Walk The Talk

It's all very well having a document that outlines the standards of behaviour expected from everyone, but it's important that you understand your role in setting and adhering to the standard.

While you might not think that standards matter, your staff will always be watching you and assessing what's important to you. In other words, by your actions and words, you set the baseline which others will follow. If you see something that doesn't align with the cultural values, but you walk past or turn a blind eye, then by default what you've done is just set a 'new' lower standard as a result.



Here's a tip to help you reflect on your effectiveness as a Leader:

1. What impact does my behaviour and language have on the team?
2. How clear and realistic am I in my expectations of myself and others?
3. Take responsibility for your actions and reactions to various scenarios and hold yourself to the standards that you expect of others.



“To be effective at leading others, you first need to be effective in leading yourself”

Matthew Pickering - Coach



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Understand Everyone In Your Team

Employment is not just a one way street. As much as you want to have your needs met, your employees will be feeling exactly the same way.

Which begs the question, do you know what your staff actually want from their employment and their career? If not, then we urge you to set time aside to make this happen. Not just a chat over the rails, but a purposeful one-on-one discussion where you ask relevant questions and listen intentionally.

Here's what you might ask:

- What skills do you want to learn/develop next?
- What are your goals?
- How do you think your career goals can be best aligned with our farm?

Before leaving the discussion check you both have the same understanding of where to from here. Empathetic listening shows your commitment and makes your staff feel valued because they are seen, heard and acknowledged.

The last part of the process is to set time for checking in. This might be a five minute daily chat, a monthly review and a quarterly planning reset.

All of this understanding builds a depth in relationship and provides the opportunity to discover development aspirations in your team, this is imperative when things get tough, as it's these solid relationships that will carry you through.



“One of the things you might discuss with your staff at their one-on-one meetings could be about their interests or aspirations outside the farm gate. Consider how you might support them to achieve their goals. It might not seem like much to you, but it could be the difference between them staying or moving on.”

Dani Darke - Coach



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Be Clear About Roles & Responsibilities

As well as being 'seen and heard', people want clarity around how they fit into the workplace, primarily because it makes them feel secure about what the expectations are around their role and performance.

There are many ways to achieve this, with some of the most common being regular task allocation during weekly team meetings, and job descriptions which outline each role and its responsibilities.

Going through job descriptions individually will highlight any potential capability or skill gaps. The one on ones provide the

opportunity to develop both individual staff development goals and also to meet farm operational needs. This will put the spotlight on who is responsible for which activity, and it's also a useful way to organise 'back up' and support so that key tasks have more than one person who can do the work.

Effective delegation does more than just free you, as the leader, it also creates opportunity for your team to grow in skill and confidence - increasing a sense of ownership for results. Not only will the trainer feel valued, but it's also proven that teaching someone else embeds the learning even more for the trainer as well.



"I remind my farmer clients that we all have hidden talents and strengths, but sometimes in a work environment they are not seen or sought. If someone shows an interest in training others, this is a really useful way to support them to grow and learn, and it signals trust and confidence in others too."

Chris Coughlan - Coach



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Practice Effective Communication

There's no one size fits all when it comes to communication, and there are no rules saying how it has to be done on your farm.

Over the years at Rural Coach, we've seen all kinds of communication techniques including whiteboards, text messages and flowcharts, as well as comprehensive written documents. Indeed, the most successful farmers will have more than one style to suit those working on their farm.

Before diving in and assuming your way of learning is the right

way, take the time to ask your team what works best for them. Understand learning difficulties or language barriers that might get in the way. While discussing communication style, it's also a good time to ask your team if your communication is enough or whether more information is required, or if the guidelines you are giving are clear.

Leadership is not just about telling. It's about seeking to understand how people learn, and then pivoting and adapting so that your messages get through with clarity, and as intended.



“On one farm, the owner identified that a staff member was a whizz at illustrations and so he asked them to help with the documentation of the instructions for the team. Not only did the illustrator feel like they were valued, but the team also benefitted from the easy-to-follow instructions to guide their work”

Rob Hewitt - Coach



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Systems, Processes & Routines

Farm systems, processes and routines help your people do the job as expected, even when you're not around. They give staff the confidence to make decisions within their skill set, and the knowledge that they are doing what is required.

The same can be said of team meetings, which need to be held regularly with standard agendas and a safe space for everyone in the organisation to have their say. Don't cancel meetings when times get busy or problematic, as these are absolutely the time when meetings need to be held to maintain connections and problem solve for everyone's benefit.



If you can't be there for a meeting, then delegate the responsibility to someone else in your team who you trust to uphold your standards and make it happen. What we do know is that the highest performing teams all prioritise regular and consistent communication, and don't let team meetings slip when they get busy.



“Think about a job you loved and what you loved about it? Do you remember what you were being paid or do you remember how you were made to feel?”

John Redpath - Coach



Put It Into Practice: See **Resource #2** on page 14 of this booklet



9

Invest In Yourself & Your Team

It's important that you prioritise professional development for you and your team, and allow time to refresh and reinvigorate.

Businesses in the corporate world have a budget for professional development, and they'll regard that spend as an investment, rather than a cost. Yet, as farmers, we often don't like to spend money on ourselves or training for our team. When it comes to investing in your own professional development, your actions serve as a clear signal to your staff that you are keen to keep learning and developing, and that it's part of 'how we do things around here'. It also shows your team that you trust them to step up.

Similarly, there's huge value in investing in your team, so they can grow and prosper.



Of course, there's tremendous power in learning together. Perhaps you can attend Fielddays or similar events, or look for local workshops and take key members of your team along too.

It's also important that you and your team take 'time out' to go off duty. For you, this might mean going fishing or watching a rugby match. For your team, there could be a myriad of interests. By knowing what these are and supporting these interests, you are demonstrating a real commitment to your people and the things that are important to them.



“There's an adage that 'you can't pour from an empty cup' and whether we like it or not, it holds true for New Zealand farmers too. When our cup is full, we can help to fill the cups of those around us.”

Ashley Burdon - Coach



Resources

Want to get started? Here are some proven resources that we use regularly or refer to. Click on the links to view the resources online.

1. Job Description Templates

Templates to help you write appropriate and thorough job descriptions.

👉 www.dairynz.co.nz/resources/people/?page=2

Suggested Action: Review each Job Description – one:one and assess current competencies. Identify any training objectives / needs. Agree on meeting schedule and agenda content e.g. monitoring / reporting farm KPI's, 'Wins' and 'Opportunities'. Encourage all to contribute to the team meeting discussions.

2. Management Resources

Resources to help you develop and share with your team What 'good' looks like around here.

👉 www.dairynz.co.nz/resources/people/

👉 beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub

👉 www.leanfarm.nz/

Suggested Action: Ensure team members understand task requirements – What does 'good' look like? Who else in the team can provide training? Delegate where possible.

3. Events & Workshops

Off farm training and industry events can also provide great learning and develop skills further.

👉 www.ruralcoach.co.nz/ignite-rural-leadership/

👉 www.dairynz.co.nz/events/

👉 beeflambnz.com/events

👉 www.dwn.co.nz/events/

👉 www.rabobank.co.nz/community/client-councils

👉 farmstrong.co.nz/events/

Suggested Action: Training and development opportunities don't just come from a classroom. On farm training and industry events can also provide great learning – take team members to focus group days, provide on farm training or utilise industry good events. Take the team off farm or have a shared meal. Understand the value of refreshing yourself and for the team in having time away from work – there is life beyond the farm gate for all of us!



Farm Teams &
High Performance

Rural Coach offers coaching and workshops around effective communication, engagement, leadership and culture for individuals and teams.

1:1 Coaching

Our method involves working with individuals on a personal growth plan, with a key focus on actions and accountability. As Coaches, we provide insight and perspective to help clear pathways so that success can be achieved. Our coaching is given in person and online using a combination of scheduled and 'just in time' sessions to suit individual need.

High Performance Teams Workshop

We combine our experience with our training in TetraMap (a globally proven behavioural preference model framework) to work with your team to build a programme that best meets your needs. The result: a team that performs cohesively and works to a higher level for better outcomes.

Ignite...

Ignite Leadership Programme

This two day programme is Rural New Zealand focused, with its objectives being to:

- Improve your ability to communicate effectively
- Support the development of those around you;
- Adapt to where individuals and teams are at, and to lead change from there.



People 360 Programme

As the name suggests, People360 is a 'full circle' review process which helps identify what is going well and what opportunities there are for improvement and growth for you and your team. This programme is particularly useful for those looking to develop people, teams and careers.



Ready to take your leadership and team development to the next level? Email hello@ruralcoach.co.nz or connect directly with your local coach (see page 3 of this booklet)



Confident farmers achieving their dreams



Ready when you are

E: hello@ruralcoach.co.nz

www.ruralcoach.co.nz

