



# Stepping Stones

On-farm career pathways in the Australian Dairy Industry

## Stepping Stones – Career Pathways

Australia's dairy farmers are highly-skilled professionals who are proud and passionate about their industry.

The Australian dairy industry offers a large variety of fulfilling careers and education opportunities that can progress throughout a dairy career.

The important thing about planning your career is that you need to choose the right pathway for you.

Stepping Stones provides information on the different types of careers and explores the many pathways available for people looking to start a career on a dairy farm, or for experienced people who want to progress their dairy career further.

Read dairy farmer profiles from around Australia, advice on dairy careers, progression and great career tips from farmers. Whether you want work on a dairy farm or own your own property, Stepping Stones can help you find the pathway to achieve your career goal.

You can read about farmers such as Will Colbert, a share farmer in Victoria who enjoys the responsibility of running the business and seeing it grow. While a senior farm hand, Will developed his business knowledge and started to explore share farming. He currently manages a farm in a 50% share farming arrangement, milking 150 cows on 100 hectares and aims to increase the herd size each year.

Read about Ben Sparrow, an Assistant Farmhand in South Australia who loves being outdoors, working with animals and the day to day variety of his role. While working, Ben completed a Certificate II in Agriculture and plans to build his skills and further develop his dairy career.

**Stepping Stones can be downloaded from:**  
[www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/steppingstones](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/steppingstones)

## Why Dairy?

### Dairy is important

For almost 200 years, Australia's dairy farmers have been producing the dairy foods we enjoy every day. These high-quality products are consumed by millions of Australians and sold around the world.

The Australian dairy industry is a \$13 billion farm, manufacturing and export industry. It is a major employer and contributes billions of dollars to the Australian economy. The dairy industry is a vital contributor to regional Australian communities – it creates jobs, provides food and supports the local economy.

**5,699 dairy farms in Australia produce 9.2 billion litres of milk a year and employ around 24,000 people on-farm\*.**

### A career for life

The Australian dairy industry offers real opportunities for people who want to build a career rather than just have a job.

Australia's dairy farmers are skilled, innovative professionals who are passionate about their industry. They are committed to the health and wellbeing of their animals, land and communities, and are involved in all phases of the dairy industry whether it is on farm, or off.

The industry offers flexibility and work/life balance, and there is always something new to learn – building, computer operations, plumbing, nutrition, agronomy, machine operating, driving tractors, and looking after an animal's welfare – to just name a few!

New technology on dairy farms, such as automated (robotic) milking is providing the opportunity for a different way to manage dairy farms. Cows are milked automatically, and the farmer manages the process and the information generated through the system. Smaller scale dairy operations are an important focus for these automated operations.

The dairy industry creates careers for life – it is a progressive and technologically advanced industry with world-leading practices.

### You can get qualified

Dairy industry education and training is practical and courses relate to what you do on the farm. You can continue to build on your qualifications as you work and there are opportunities to learn about specialist areas.

Industry training is provided through a combination of formal (accredited) and informal programs offered through Dairy Australia, tertiary and vocational education and regional programs.

Qualifications provide a pathway to reach your career goals and the qualifications you gain will be nationally recognised - you can take them anywhere in Australia.

### Dairy Australia

**03 9694 3777**

[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)

[www.thepeopleindairy.org.au](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au)

*\*Australian Dairy Industry In Focus 2018 (Dairy Australia)*



## Planning your pathway

Career progression and pathway planning is the key to reaching your career goals. You may be starting in the dairy industry, wanting to progress further or wishing to progress to more senior farm positions.

The model below gives an example overview of what your pathway planning should look like.

And remember, sometimes planning your pathway may seem daunting, so break it into pieces and focus on each goal ahead, one step at a time!

### Step One: Where are you now?

Don't just think about your current knowledge or job – consider the skills you have; your interests, the way you behave at work, your general attitude to your job, your workplace and the dairy industry in general.

- Do you like to work outdoors?
- Do you like working with people, animals and/or machinery?
- What are your non-work based skills, hobbies or interests?
- What is your education level?
- Do you have any specific work-based skills?
- Have you completed industry training or courses?
- What type of work do you do, you have any previous experience or training?
- What is your life like outside of work?

### Step Two: Where do you want to go?

Once you recognise your skills and interests, think about the career pathways that may suit you.

Remember, you might not want to move out of the job you already have, but you may want to learn how to do it better or plan for the future.

- Think about the type of work you really want to do, and why. Consider the long term, not just your short term needs
- Consider fields of work that match who you are, your interests, and your current skill-set
- Are you looking for career advancement?
- Do you have, or need specialist skills or training to reach your goals?

## Step Three: Plan your journey

A career pathway is all about focusing on the journey, not just the destination.

You can continue to progress, gain experience and skills right throughout your career, and having a clear pathway helps to achieve your goals.

- Have you planned long term goals?
- Consider study options, training and specialist courses that will help you achieve your goals
- What industry programs can you get involved with?
- Set realistic goals!

### Step Four: Ask for advice

It's your career pathway – seek out information and speak to people who can offer tips and advice.

You can learn about the different jobs available on a dairy farm in this booklet – read the job profiles and the farmer case studies for some great progression tips.

- Talk to people in the industry for advice on how to reach your career goals
- If you're at school, talk to career advisors and teachers
- Contact training organisations, read course guides and learn about industry programs
- Get involved in Dairy Australia and regional programs
- Learn about dairy industry scholarships

## Contacts for further information

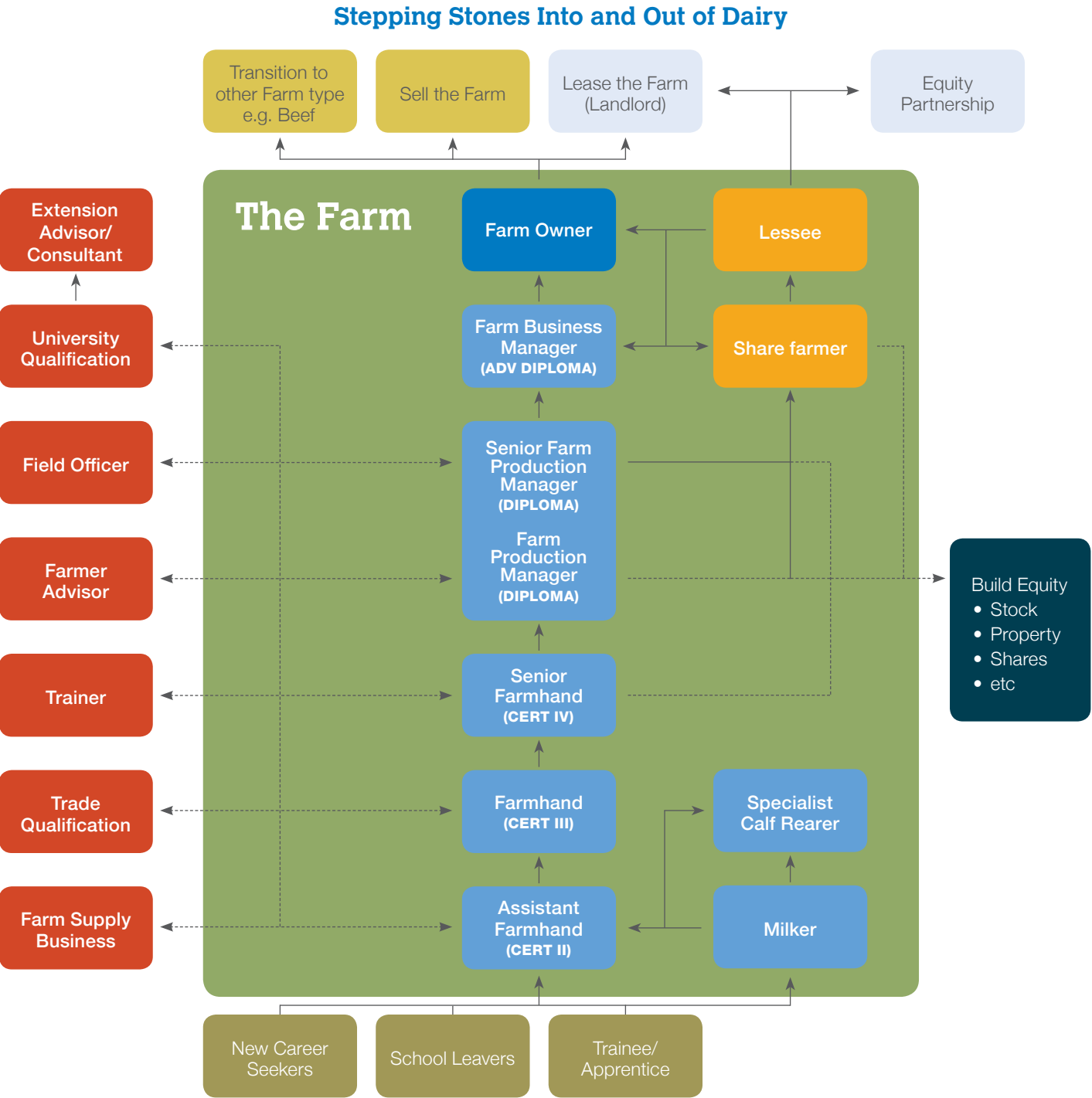
**Dairy Australia**

[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)



Dairy Pathways

Stepping Stones is all about showing you the many pathways that are available in the Australian dairy industry. You may be thinking now about starting a career as a trainee on a dairy farm, however one day, you may have the potential to operate your own dairy farm. Or you could be currently working in the industry and are looking for opportunities to progress your position to a more senior role. The model shows a number of pathways on how to enter and progress your career in the Australian dairy industry, including qualifications at each stage.









## **Nikita Suridge** **Milker, Darling Downs, Queensland**

Nikita Suridge works as a milker and second in charge (2IC) on a 900 hectare dairy farm on the Darling Downs. Nikita has been working for almost 4 years on the farm which milks 400 cows.

“Growing up we had free range pigs. I went to University and started studying a Diploma of Applied Science, majoring in Animal Production. I did it for a year because I wanted to do piggery work, but there weren’t any jobs at the time. So I changed to a Bachelor of Applied Science, majoring in Wildlife, to be a biology teacher,” Nikita said.

In 2011 Nikita finished University, moved to Leyburn where a neighbour put her in contact with a local dairy farmer. She had gained some work experience on mixed farms while at school and University, but had limited dairy experience.

“I started working and I’ve been there ever since,” she said. “While I was on a trial at the farm, my boss Rachel asked if I was willing to stay. I said yes because I loved it.”

Nikita predominately works in the dairy and steps up to be 2IC when her manager has time away from the farm. She starts each day at 3.30am when she milks the cows and rears calves, she then checks the springers and completes odd jobs such as fixing fences and silage wrapping, before finishing around 4pm.

Nikita loves her job - she especially enjoys working outside with cattle. She works alongside a team of 10 employees and learns from dairy consultants who visit the farm to offer advice on nutrition and breeding plans.

“Dairy is definitely the way to go for people who are dedicated, have passion, enjoy working with animals and love being outdoors. It is a very rewarding job,” she said.

Nikita appreciates that working in a constantly changing environment can sometimes be challenging.

Monitoring cow health is important and her workload can be different day to day and seasonally –these variations make the job interesting.

Off farm, Nikita is a member of SubTropical Dairy’s Young Dairy Network (YDN), has completed an Artificial Insemination (AI) and euthanasia of livestock course.

“The YDN days are good for meeting other farmers and being able to socialise. It is also good to gain skills off farm and from other people who you don’t work with everyday,” she said.

In September 2014, Nikita started a Diploma of Agriculture to further broaden her skill set. She opted to study online so she can complete course work at her own pace, while working full time.

Nikita’s future goal is to own her own dairy farm, “I think that is the ultimate goal - to own and run my own farm,” she said. “At the moment, I am trying to find out all the key information. I have discussed it with my boss and I’ve been asking other people how to go about it.”

### **Nikita’s tips:**

- Thinking about a dairy career - give it a go: do some work experience or ask a local farmer if they are interested in giving you a trial or occasional work
- Start off casual and work your way up: see if you like it and then you’ll know if you want to work on a dairy farm and/or go on to further study. You could be interested in studying a specialist field - like nutrition or reproduction - there are so many different areas that tie in to dairy
- Nobody expects a person starting off to be at a professional level
- Good communication skills are a big bonus



Relief Milker or Milker							
The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<p>Typical Day – rostered for early starts, time off during the day, then evening milking.</p> <p>Tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — check, start and operate the dairy</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — identify cows with mastitis, teat damage, lameness and other illnesses</li> <li>• Assist in the clean up of the milking shed</li> <li>• Assist with collecting cows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like working with animals</li> <li>• Like working as part of a team</li> <li>• Like working outdoors</li> <li>• Like working with machinery</li> <li>• Happy to start early and to finish in the evening</li> <li>• Able to stand and work for extended periods during milk harvesting</li> <li>• Honesty and reliability, for example, turning up for work on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience and care with the animals</li> <li>• Ability to take initiative and work independently</li> <li>• Being a team player</li> <li>• Taking pride in the work and workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This role can be a casual role or a part time contract</li> <li>• The minimum pay rate is \$19.49 per hour (from first pay period starting 1 July 2019 – noting these rates are reviewed annually)</li> <li>• Flexible hours which may suit your lifestyle</li> </ul>	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>For Relief Milker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cert II in Agriculture</li> <li>• Cups on Cups Off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers licence</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist Calf Rearer</li> <li>• Assistant Farmhand</li> </ul> <p><b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 1 years experience for Calf Rearer role</li> <li>• Up to 1 month experience for Assistant farmhand</li> </ul>

\*Check the latest pay rates at [www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/payrates](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/payrates)



## Sarah Redgrove

### Calf Rearer, Hunter Valley, New South Wales

Sarah Redgrove was born into dairy. She grew up on a family farm at Vacy in the Hunter Region of New South Wales.

“My parents own a dairy farm so I grew up helping out,” Sarah said. “Instead of doing year 11 and 12 at school, I spent 2 years and did a Certificate III and IV in Agriculture.”

After studying, Sarah returned home and worked on her parent’s farm for over a year, doing general farmhand work such as milking, calf rearing and tractor work. Sarah’s aim was to move into the beef industry however, her plan soon changed.

“My plan was to get into the beef industry but then I met my husband, Daniel, and his parents own a dairy. We’ve now been on the farm for 5 years and we run it with Daniel’s parents.”

The 485 hectare farm located just outside of Singleton, milks 400 cows and employs 4 staff members. Daniel manages the farm alongside his parents, John and Allison, and with a love of calves, Sarah nominated herself for the role of calf rearer.

“You don’t do the same thing every day. Calf rearing is like looking after kids, it’s rewarding because you see them progress into healthy cows,” she said.

There is a lot of responsibility involved in Sarah’s role; she not only has to be reliable, but she also has to make important decisions, especially in the prevention and treatment of sick calves. She believes the qualities required to be a calf rearer are patience, reliability and a caring nature.

“You have to be reliable because the calves need

to be fed at the same time every day, so they can get into a routine. Sometimes there’s a calf that won’t drink, so you need to have patience. You also need to be caring, but know how to show some tough love as well.”

With a one year old son, calf rearing offers Sarah flexibility and allows her to maintain a positive work/life balance. When possible, she also helps out on farm with milking and tractor work.

Sarah and Daniel are actively involved in the local industry through Dairy NSW discussion groups. The group of local farmers meet for farm field days and information sessions, last year the Redgrove’s hosted a discussion group at their property.

“I go to field days to see how other people work,” Sarah said. “They are good as we do things on the farm our way and at the field days, you can learn how other people operate. Last year, people came to our place and looked at how we operated.”

Sarah is grateful that she can do what she loves every day. She aims to remain a calf rearer, a role that she finds rewarding because she can witness the calves grow into healthy, strong cows.





Calf Rearer							
The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
Tasks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeding calves</li> <li><b>Wellbeing of calves</b> — monitoring their health, vaccination, treating animals</li> <li>Assist in the clean up of the calf rearing shed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 6 months experience in rearing calves</li> <li>Like working with young animals</li> <li>'Self starter' – able to work unsupervised</li> <li>Like working outdoors</li> <li>Capable of handling calves</li> <li>Happy to start early and to finish in the evening</li> <li>Honesty and reliability, for example, turning up for work on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patience and care with animals</li> <li>Ability to take initiative and work independently</li> <li>High level of organising skills</li> <li>Taking pride in the work and the calf rearing facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This role can be a casual role or a part time contract</li> <li><b>The minimum pay rate is \$19.49 per hour (from first pay period starting 1 July 2019 – noting these rates are reviewed annually) Flexible hours which may suit your lifestyle</b></li> </ul>	Every Dairy Region has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	For Calf Rearing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rearing Healthy Calves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drivers licence</li> <li>Transport</li> </ul>	<div> <b>Roles:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant Farm Hand</li> <li>Farmhand</li> </ul> </div> <div> <b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 1 years experience for Farmhand role</li> <li>Up to 1 month experience for Assistant farmhand</li> </ul> </div>

\*Check the latest pay rates at [www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/payrates](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/payrates)

## Ben Sparrow

### Assistant Farmhand - Mount Schank, South Australia

Growing up in the Northern Territory, Ben Sparrow moved to Mount Gambier when he was ten years old. "After school, I did a few odd jobs and helped my Dad out with some carpentry work but once I started working on a dairy, I really found my calling," Ben said.

Ben was attracted to agriculture because it offered him the chance to work outdoors. At nineteen years old, and without a dairy farming background, Ben started working as an Assistant Farmhand on a dairy located at Mount Schank, just outside of Mount Gambier.

The large farm milks around 2000 cows over two dairies. Ben works in dairy #2, milking 950 cows with five other farmhands. He actively learns from others on the farm and when a new employee or work experience student commences, Ben teaches them about the dairy.

Ben enjoys being an Assistant Farmhand as every day is different. In his role, he is required to complete a range of tasks to ensure the dairy is run smoothly - from milking and feeding cows to assisting with herd health.

"I have been exposed to so many different tasks and responsibilities - I really have enjoyed it," Ben said. "I like assisting with the many day to day tasks on the farm including feeding and animal health. I also enjoy talking to new people when they start, showing them how to do things and helping them learn."

He likes that his job is varied and believes the best aspects of his position are working with animals, being outdoors, "I love that I get to be outdoors every day, I would hate to be stuck behind a desk!" Ben said.

Ben appreciates that working with livestock can sometimes be challenging; his role involves waking up early every day and he is required to monitor cow health and look after sick cows, a part of the role he finds very rewarding. "I enjoy the responsibility - I am very passionate about making sure the cows stay happy and healthy," he said.

To be a successful Assistant Farmhand, a person must have good communication skills, be trustworthy and reliable. Ben believes there are many opportunities to enter the industry and learn.

Ben has also had the opportunity to further his skills and build his dairy industry knowledge. In 2014, while working, Ben completed a Certificate II in Agriculture. On certain days, Ben completed the course off-farm and after classes would return to the dairy to milk.

"I really enjoyed the course and I met some great friends. What I have found most beneficial is the hands on experience I have gained on the farm," Ben said.

Now 21 years old, and with two years of Assistant Farmhand experience under his belt, Ben's goal is to keep learning and developing himself. "I feel very lucky that I have a job that I enjoy. It is also great to know that there are many opportunities to build on my skills and further develop my dairy career," Ben said.





## Assistant Farmhand

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — collecting the cows from the paddock</li> <li>• Milk cows in the shed with a more experienced person</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — identify and treat common animal health problems, identify, record and care for newborn calves</li> <li>• <b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> — load and feed</li> <li>• Feed out hay or silage using machinery</li> <li>• Implement cleaning and maintenance under supervision</li> <li>• Implement milking quality assurance procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like working with animals</li> <li>• Like working as part of a team</li> <li>• Like working outdoors</li> <li>• Like working with machinery, and can operate equipment (eg. tractor) under supervision</li> <li>• Happy to work as part of the farm roster with weekend work included</li> <li>• Able to stand and work for extended periods during milk harvesting</li> <li>• Honesty and reliability, for example, turning up for work on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience and care with the animals</li> <li>• Take responsibility for keeping yourself and others safe</li> <li>• Ability to take initiative and work independently</li> <li>• Being a team player</li> <li>• Taking pride in the work and workplace</li> </ul>	Around \$32,000 to \$45,000	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>For Assistant Farmhand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cert II in Agriculture</li> <li>• Cups on Cups Off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers licence</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist Calf Rearer</li> <li>• Senior Farmhand</li> </ul> <p><b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 1 years experience for Calf Rearer role</li> <li>• Up to 2 years experience for Senior Farmhand</li> <li>• Completed Cert II in Agriculture</li> </ul>

## Michael Hawker Farmhand, Milltown, Victoria

Michael has grown up on the family farm where he is currently employed full time. He has known from a very young age this was the life and career he wanted to pursue. The day to day variation of tasks held his interest and the range of skills that he started to develop during his younger years, ignited his passion to be a part of the family business long term.

Michael ventured away from the industry to complete an apprenticeship for a light vehicle mechanic and for a brief period as part of a Blue Gum contracting service, before moving back to the dairy farm. He now is pursuing further qualifications within the dairy industry, completing a Diploma of Agriculture. He has also attended a Cows and Fertility Session and In Charge Profitable Feeding Programme provided by West Vic Dairy RDP. Through this off-farm training, Michael is developing his knowledge, skills and confidence for furthering his career in the dairy industry.

Situated in the town of Milltown, just out of Heywood, Michael oversees the day to day running and completion of tasks for the dairy farm. With 500 cows milked on 380 hectares, one of the challenges the business is tackling is to condense the calving pattern from its current drawn out seasonal calving pattern. This is an important focus as Michael knows it will impact the overall demands on the business by allowing everyone to have more of a break at different times of the year. The major goal of the business is a longer term sustainable path that will provide opportunities for all those involved in the family business. Michael sees opportunity for himself and other family members as they work for the long term benefits, and the fulfilment of a successful succession plan.

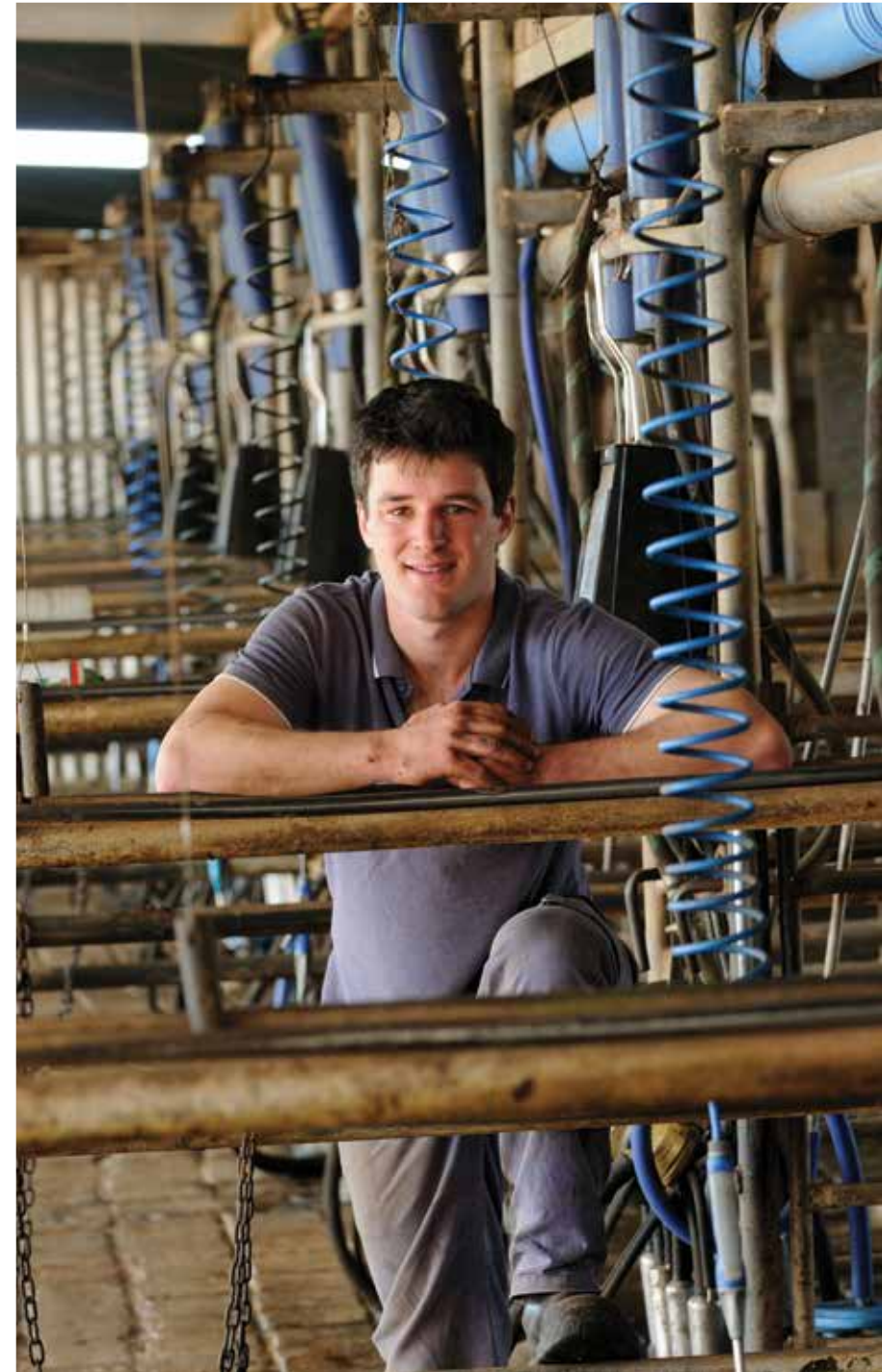
Through his rapid knowledge gain and skills attribution, Michael has used his initiative to run a small scale heifer replacement business by adjusting the neighbouring property to raise and grow out young stock. He identifies this as a major benefit of the dairy industry – the versatility of starting to build wealth creation independently.

Michael is involved with the Glenelg Young Dairy Development Programme as a committee member which provides an opportunity to network with other young dairy farmers in the area. With successful events being run and plenty more in the pipeline, this is a rewarding off-farm venture.

Michael was also awarded the 2015 Great South West Dairy Award of *Young Dairy Leader of the Year*. He is proud of this achievement and it is recognition for his contribution in the dairy industry.

Michael is enthusiastic and passionate about the dairy industry. He appreciates the flexibility of his career choice, acknowledging that regular time off is important and enables him to pursue his interests with the CFA.

Michael sees that his role as a Farmhand offers flexibility, long term goals, daily rewards and plenty of opportunities to learn and develop himself in dairy industry.





Farmhand							
The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — check, start and operate the dairy unassisted.</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — identify cows with mastitis, teat damage, lameness and other illnesses. Manage the program for cows due to calve, regularly observe and attend to animal health needs, assist in calving cows.</li> <li>• Carry out farm vaccination and drenching programs</li> <li>• <b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> — determine pasture availability and oversee its allocation</li> <li>• Operate and maintain feeding equipment</li> <li>• Implement farm pest and weed programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like working with animals</li> <li>• Like working as part of a team</li> <li>• Like working outdoors</li> <li>• Like working with machinery</li> <li>• Happy to work as part of the farm roster with weekend work included</li> <li>• Able to stand and work for extended periods during milk harvesting</li> <li>• Honesty and reliability, for example, turning up for work on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience and care with the animals</li> <li>• Able to take responsibility for keeping yourself and others safe</li> <li>• Ability to take initiative and work independently</li> <li>• Being a team player</li> <li>• Taking pride in the work and workplace</li> <li>• Can work independantly and follow farm procedures</li> </ul>	Around \$33,000 to \$50,000	Every Dairy Region has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	For Farmhand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cert III in Agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers licence</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Keep saving</li> <li>• Look at the option of raising stock</li> </ul> <a href="http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/stepping-stones/calfcosts.htm">www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/stepping-stones/calfcosts.htm</a>	<div> <b>Roles:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Farmhand</li> </ul> </div> <div> <b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 2 years experience for Senior Farmhand</li> <li>• Completed Cert III in Agriculture</li> </ul> </div>

## Lachy Dullard Senior Farmhand, Colac, Victoria

Lachy Dullard has taken his career into his own hands. He has turned some relief milking into a rewarding and enjoyable career in the dairy industry. His initial need for extra cash during university holidays provided him with an epiphany that working on a dairy farm was what he wanted to pursue.

Lachy grew up in the Colac district with his parents who are both teachers. Their family enjoyed a dry stock unit with Angus beef cows which gave him an opportunity to develop an understanding and compassion for animals. Lachy had planned his education path; after completing year 12 at Colac, he attended university to complete a Bachelor of Science majoring in Genetics and Chemistry as a pre requisite to becoming a veterinarian. During his university holidays, Lachy pursued casual employment with relief milking and this was where his 'love' for dairy was recognised.

During this period of relief milking, Lachy had a light bulb moment while bringing the cows in on a beautiful picturesque afternoon. Cows coming up the laneway, outside, he asked himself – why would I want to be doing anything else? The simple answer – he didn't.

Lachy then approached the farm owner for the possibility of permanent employment, with the opportunity to grow in his role and responsibilities. The farm owner saw the potential in Lachy and was impressed with his work ethic, so work was made available.

Lachy appreciates that he was fortunate to start his career with modern facilities including an 80 bale rotary with automatic cow identification. The total farming operation consists of multiple farms, so opportunity to increase responsibilities also keeps Lachy motivated. The business is in a state of expansion and development, providing an exciting space to be involved in.

Improving skills and knowledge is always a big component with any job, and Lachy recognises his employer's commitment to improving his knowledge and

understanding constantly. After his first year of working on the farm, he was selected to go on a Dairy Study Tour of New Zealand with the UDV and has completed a 'Pastures for Profit' course which was extremely beneficial.

Work life balance is important and Lachy recognised he needed to communicate what he wanted and negotiate with the farm owner and managers for possibilities. After working hard to learn all the aspects of the dairy business, he has negotiated extra time to himself. He finishes work at a time that allows him to pursue other interests and has a flexible arrangement which is one of the many benefits of the dairy industry.

Lachy has also used his knowledge to pursue personal asset growth by purchasing a block of land which he uses to adjust dairy cows for farmers in the district. He harvests hay from the land and has set himself up to run a successful small business. The farmers know their stock is in good hands as Lachy has an empathy and knowledge of feed requirements and condition that the cows should be striving for.

The key to developing and continuing to develop is communication. Lachy strongly acknowledges that support from his employers, and identifies there is accountability of success from both sides of the relationship. If he has ideas, or needs to discuss something, he always approaches the managers and owners and they work out a resolution.

He believes that through his hard work, attention to detail and passion for learning, he has gained respect in the workplace and therefore he's been promoted to assistant farm manager on another farm within the family business.

Lachy is excited about his future in the industry. The decision to relief milk to fund his university days has led him to a rewarding, enjoyable, challenging and diverse career.





## Senior Farmhand

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — organise and oversee staff involved in the dairy operation, oversee the milk quality assurance program and OH&amp;S program</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — administer drenches, vaccines, mineral supplements and other appropriate animal husbandry</li> <li>• Monitor the reproductive performance of the herd</li> <li>• <b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> — set up, operate and monitor concentrate feed equipment, determine the most appropriate time to graze fodder crops</li> <li>• <b>Pasture Production and Cropping</b> – determine paddock rotation for optimum pasture utilisation, follow weed management policy</li> <li>• <b>Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance</b> – oversee the maintenance program for farm vehicles, equipment and implements</li> <li>• Supervise the OH+S practices on farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like working with animals</li> <li>• Like working as part of a team</li> <li>• Like working outdoors</li> <li>• Like working with machinery</li> <li>• Happy to work as part of the farm roster with weekend work included</li> <li>• Able to stand and work for extended periods during milk harvesting</li> <li>• Honesty and reliability, for example, turning up for work on time</li> <li>• Be computer literate in regard to report writing and financial management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience and care with the animals</li> <li>• Ability to take initiative and work independently</li> <li>• Being a team player</li> <li>• Taking pride in the work and workplace</li> <li>• Be able to supervise staff and staff training</li> <li>• Communication skills and the ability to resolve conflicts</li> </ul>	<p>Around \$40,000 to \$50,000</p>	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• <b>Industry Leadership Programs</b></li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>For Senior Farmhand/ Farm Supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cert IV in Agriculture</li> <li>• Cups on Cups Off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers licence</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Keep building your dairy assets</li> <li>• Keep building stock</li> <li>• Think about farm equipment purchases</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm Production Manager</li> </ul> <p><b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 3-5 years experience for Farm Production Manager</li> <li>• Completed Cert IV in Agriculture</li> </ul>

## Kellie Price

### Farm Production Manager, Yannathan, Victoria

Kellie Price has been involved in the dairy industry for twelve years. She is currently a Farm Manager working with her brother Dean Turner, a share farmer in Yannathan.

In 2003 when she was a year ten student, Kellie elected to participate in her school's VCAL program. This allowed her to attend school three days a week, learn at TAFE one day a week and work one day a week.

With a love of animals and the outdoors, Kellie chose to work on a dairy farm. For her placement she shared work experience between the dairy farms of Ray and Gini Patullo in Lang Lang and Noel and Ann Campbell in Yannathan.

Kellie worked for the Patullos for two years and completed both a Certificate II and III in Agriculture. She then moved to the Campbell's dairy farm and continued her apprenticeship, and when she finished in 2006, she became a farmhand.

Kellie continued working for the Campbell's as a farmhand until 2010 when she decided it was time for a change. She successfully applied for a job as a Semen Representative for Genetics Australia, working throughout the region of South Gippsland. While working, she continued to relief milk on the Campbell's dairy farm.

In her role at Genetics Australia, Kellie was involved with bull selection, calf dehorning and Artificial Insemination (AI) for farmers. She enjoyed the work but started to realise that she had a strong passion for dairy farming and an urge to work again on farm.

In 2012, Kellie's brother Dean and his wife Rebecca became share farmers on the Campbell's farm. Kellie was keen to take the next step in her career so when Dean offered her the role of Farm Manager, she jumped at the chance.

Kellie once again returned to full-time work on the Campbell's farm and she thrived in the role and responsibilities. Milking 460 cows on 180 hectares,

she now works along side her brother Dean, and one part-time and two relief milkers.

No two days on farm are alike and there is always something different to do. Kellie treats the farm like it is her own, ensuring that it is always operating as efficiently and productively as possible. Kellie finds her career highly rewarding as it offers her a lifestyle that other jobs could not provide.

Kellie also acknowledges that dairy farming has its challenges. As a Farm Manager, her main challenge is ensuring the cows incalf, as it results directly on production and impacts cow health.

Kellie is now married to Anthony, a builder by trade and currently a fencing contractor. She believes that women are an asset to the dairy industry and most would be surprised of what they are capable of achieving on farm.

Working as a Farm Manager has offered Kellie many opportunities to become involved in the industry. She is part of a local discussion group of farmers who meet once a month. Kellie has learnt a lot from the meetings and believes that discussion groups are an important way for young farmers to not only meet new people, but also gain extra experience and knowledge.

Stepping up in the industry is something that Kellie is keen to keep working towards. She is currently Chairperson of the West Gippsland Young Dairy Development Program (YDDP), a group that encourages young people to meet and network with other farmers in the area.

With support from farm owner Noel and her brother Dean, Kellie is looking forward to more opportunities of industry leadership roles and networking. As for her dairy farming career, Kellie's future goal is to take her experience to the next level; her aim is to work towards share farming on a dairy farm in Gippsland with her husband Anthony.





## Farm Production Manager

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — Identify and correct problems in the machine function and operation</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — select cows for AI and assist with bull selection, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff</li> <li>• <b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> — set the rotation and oversee the delivery to all livestock, oversee the sourcing and reticulation of water to livestock to meet their requirements</li> <li>• <b>Pasture Production and Cropping</b> – determine the soil fertiliser program using soil fertility and production data, determine nitrogen applications based on seasonal conditions</li> <li>• <b>Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance</b> – maintain and develop paddock infrastructure including fencing, water troughs, laneways and drainage, implement the dairy maintenance schedule including the replacement of rubberware, machine testing and maintenance</li> <li>• <b>Administration</b> – ensure the farm is compliant with workplace legislation, organise rosters and allocate tasks</li> <li>• <b>Staff management recruitment</b> – recruitment, selection, induction, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management</li> <li>• Minimum of a Certificate IV in Agriculture (or equivalent)</li> <li>• High level people management skills</li> <li>• Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements</li> <li>• Take responsibility for farm performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff management and leadership</li> <li>• Communicate with farm workers and source goods &amp; services external to the business</li> <li>• Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting</li> <li>• High level of responsibility and decision making</li> <li>• Negotiation skills &amp; conflict management</li> <li>• Troubleshooting skills</li> <li>• Liaise and gather ideas outside the farm</li> </ul>	Around \$60,000 to \$75,000	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• Dairy Australia Leadership Programs</li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>For Farm Production Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma of Agriculture</li> <li>• Cert IV in Agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers licence</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Asset building to continue</li> <li>• Keep building stock and herd improvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm Business Manager</li> <li>• Share Farmer</li> <li>• Farm Owner</li> </ul> <p><b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 2 years experience for Business Manager role</li> <li>• Resources and up to 5 years experience for share farmer or ownership role</li> <li>• Completed Diploma of Agriculture</li> </ul>

## Nick Henderson Farm Business Manager, Harvey, Western Australia

Nick Henderson is Second in Charge of a 320 cow dairy farm in Harvey. He grew up on a 250 cow dairy in NZ. During his senior years of school, Nick relief milked for local farmers and moved into a full time Farmhand position on a 800 cow dairy when he finished year 12.

After 18 months, Nick got his truck license and drove livestock for a local transport company; "When I was 19, I shifted to WA to drive road trains for 3 years," Nick said. "I then went to the mines exploration drilling for 18 months but decided it wasn't for me."

Nick had always wanted to work on a cattle station so traveled north, working 2 seasons mustering and transporting cattle to Broome. "I was 24 and the station manager was 32. I was amazed how someone that young could professionally manage such a huge operation! This encouraged me to take a similar pathway and dairy farming became very appealing again," Nick said.

With a new mindset and motivation, Nick moved south to Harvey. Through word of mouth, he contacted farm owners Dale and Leanne Hanks who operate a 320 cow dairy.

Nick has been working with the Hanks for 6 months and highly values their working relationship; "Having a mindset of wanting to learn and a boss who wants to teach, works hand in hand. A career in the dairy industry is a fantastic thought," Nick said.

Each day is different on the farm. Nick wakes up early to milk the cows with another full time employee. He then completes a range of seasonal tasks; "Depending on the time of season, I could be spreading fertilizer and dealing with pasture management, carting livestock with the farm truck, artificially inseminating cows or dealing with young stock."

Nick believes to be Second in Charge, a person must be reliable, passionate, and willing to listen and learn. Nick is always learning on the job and enjoys the new responsibilities of his role. He especially likes planning daily tasks and being able to work outdoors with healthy cows.

Nick admits there are also some challenges. "The biggest challenge is adapting quickly to a very different dairy operation to what I am use to," he said. "NZ and WA are almost complete opposites -there's seasonal calving in NZ and twice yearly in WA. I really enjoy a challenge and learning different systems."

Outside of work, Nick has completed a Certificate of Artificial Insemination and is a Western Dairy Young Dairy Network (YDN) committee member. He is also involved in Rumen8, a cow nutrition group workshop that deals with seasonal changes in WA and transition feeding for cows.

"Training and industry courses are important - I definitely take opportunities when they come along," he said.

Nick's long term aim is to gain some equity; "In 5 years, I see myself firmly in the dairy industry and hoping to gain some equity to achieve my future goals," he said. "Everyone needs an ambitious goal - farm ownership would be the ultimate. I am a realist and like to set achievable goals as building blocks - one foot in front of the other."

### Nick's tips:

- Be friendly and have a good sense of humour
- Be willing to listen, learn and think outside the box
- Step outside your comfort zone to find your true potential
- Be reliable and passionate about your role
- Ask questions and take an interest in every task on the farm - showing a genuine interest opens doors



## Farm Business Manager

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business</li> <li><b>Milk Harvesting</b> — Train others in correct milk harvesting techniques</li> <li><b>Animal Husbandry</b> — organise the mating program and AI livestock, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff</li> <li><b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> — manage stored feed inventory, understand dietary requirements based on production, cost and availability, balance rations</li> <li><b>Pasture Production and Cropping</b> — determine the paddocks to lock up for fodder conservation and the most appropriate time to harvest, organise for purchase, delivery and application of fertilisers</li> <li><b>Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance</b> – maintain and develop stock handling equipment, shedding and feeding areas</li> <li><b>Administration</b> — manage accounts and tax requirements, set financial indicators and manage the farm budget, oversee the appointment of new employees, their induction, training, remuneration and performance appraisal, organise the communication system including staff meetings and whiteboards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management</li> <li>Minimum of a Diploma of Agriculture (or equivalent)</li> <li>High level people management skills</li> <li>High level Business Management skills</li> <li>Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements</li> <li>Take responsibility for farm performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business</li> <li>Staff management and leadership</li> <li>Communicate with farm workers and source goods &amp; services external to the business</li> <li>Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting</li> <li>High level of responsibility and decision making</li> <li>Negotiation skills &amp; conflict management</li> </ul>	Around \$90,000 to \$120,000	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li><b>Industry</b> Leadership programs</li> <li>Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>For Farm Production Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma of Agriculture</li> <li>Cert IV in Agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drivers licence</li> <li>Transport</li> <li>Asset building and looking at other wealth creation opportunities (e.g. purchasing and leasing out a flat or house)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share Farmer</li> <li>Farm Owner</li> </ul> <p><b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources and up to 5 years experience for share farmer or ownership role</li> <li>Completed Diploma of Agriculture</li> </ul>



## Will Colbert Share Farmer, Ripplebrook, Victoria

Will Colbert grew up on a dairy farm in Yarram. After leaving school, he became an apprentice butcher but soon missed working outdoors.

At 22 years old, Will accepted a Farmhand role on a dairy farm in Kongwak. After 8 months, he took on a Senior Farmhand role on another farm where he was responsible for the cell count, feeding, pasture management and health of a 700 cow herd.

As a Farmhand, Will taught himself how to work out income over feed costs; roughly equating how much income the cows were producing in a day, teaching him about farm costs and building his business acumen.

While a Senior Farmhand, he purchased 22 Jersey heifers at a good price when the milk price was low. A friend milked the cows, and calved and reared the heifers. However, Will's investment into the heifers was not earning money and he decided to explore share farming.

Initially, Will looked at a farm in Northern Victoria that milked 400 cows. As part of the arrangement, he needed to own half the herd which he felt was too big of a first step into share farming so declined the offer.

Will saw an advertisement offering a share farming position in Ripplebrook. He met the farm owners and they both discussed their expectations. Will admits stepping up to share farming was initially daunting but felt it was a step he needed to take for his own career growth.

Since early 2014, Will has been managing the farm in a 50% share farming arrangement, milking 150 cows on 100 hectares. He performs all work on farm and since share farming, has invested in motorbike, a second-hand tractor and a Ute. His first goal is to prepare the property to bring it up to a high production standard.

Will believes for the partnership to work, it is important to have a good relationship, understand what the farm owner wants to achieve and for both parties to have the same goals.

Share farming allows Will to have his own cows, manage feed diets, grow summer crops, and grow grass to the best of his ability. He especially likes running the business and seeing it grow and progress.

Will participated in the 2013 New Zealand Dairy Study Tour with the UDV, which opened his mind to how different dairy farms operate. He has completed a Certificate IV in Agriculture, is a member of GippsDairy's Young Dairy Development Program (YDDP) and Fonterra's discussion group.

Will believes share farming is a good starting point to get into future farm ownership. He aims to increase herd numbers from 150 to 250 to maximise the production of the dairy farm. He plans to milk 200 cows next spring, increasing to 250 in the following spring and his ultimate aim is a herd of 300 cows.

### Will's 8 tips for stepping up into share farming:

- Plan your goals: if you want to progress in the industry, you have to plan how to get there
- Discuss your career path with your employer: talk about your career and/or if you wish to step-up your position on-farm
- Learn business skills early: as a share farmer, you have to budget to ensure that you make money every day – learn how to be 'business-minded' early
- Be GST registered: claim GST back on purchases of cows, machinery, motorbikes, tractors and ear tags. Claiming GST is money back into your savings kitty
- Save money: only buy what you can afford, stay within your limits and find a good accountant
- Learn how to grow grass: it is the cheapest form of producing milk
- Be confident but also open to learn and take on advice
- Open communication is crucial: understand what the farm owner wants to achieve for the farm





## **Michael Palmer and Eliza Anderson Apprentice to Share Farmer to Owner, Sisters Creek, Tasmania**

Michael completed a four year farming Apprenticeship, beginning at the age of 16, in 1996. When he finished the Apprenticeship he was employed for four years on wages on a farm at Sisters Creek. This farm was milking 135 cows in the first year and increased to 265 cows by year three on 107 hectares. At the end of each of these years Michael purchased 25 cows off the farm owner. Michael then had 100 cows which he owned at the end of his Apprenticeship. Michael had no debt on these cows, he owned them outright as he saved through each of these years to purchase the cows.

During this period Michael also bought some bricks and mortar, a house not far from the dairy farm increasing the value of his assets. Over time this house increased in value and he was able to use it as collateral with the bank for future purchases.

Michael worked his way up to 50% share farming on this same farm and purchased 250 cows and the machinery from the farm owner. He used the bank to finance this new debt and had his parents and the farm owner as a guarantors for this loan.

The farm owner then leased the dairy farm next door and Michael leased their 150 cows and purchased another 50 cows.

The relationship to date was working well with the farm owner. There was constant discussion about the enterprise, how it was going and the future plan of the farm between all parties. After a two year period the farm owner then purchased this leased dairy farm.

Over the next ten years cow numbers increased to 600, a rotary dairy was built and the farm owner continued to purchase adjoining land. Michael purchased 30% of a 36 hectares block in his name during this period. The plan for 2014/2015 is to milk a minimum of 800 cows on this Sisters Creek property.

Michael and Eliza continually reared the maximum number of heifer calves every year that they could, so they did not have to go out and buy cows. They have increased their equity by increasing stock numbers and had forced saving (with the rearing cost of the calf and heifer into the herd). The farm owner was continually spending on infrastructure (irrigation, laneways) to improve the productivity of the dairy farm for both themselves and the share farmer to constantly increase production profitably.

Then in 2005 Michael and Eliza purchased an ex. dairy farm at Rocky Cape with Michaels' parents as equity partners. The property was used to run all the replacement stock and potatoes were grown to assist with paying the interest bill to the bank. In 2012 Michael and Eliza made the decision to convert it back to a dairy farm including building a new 30 aside herringbone shed with cup removers.

Michael and Eliza decided to convert this property to dairying as they had surplus cows and wanted to dairy in their own right. They also had a very good capable employee that was keen to become a manager on the property. Another property at this time was leased, which is close to the home dairy farm, to run the young stock.

Over this 28 year period Michael and Eliza have had very good people working for them. Their longest serving employee has been with them for 17 years and four young men have done their farming apprenticeships under Michael. Michael and Eliza place emphasis on ensuring their people are happy and have a good work life balance.

In conclusion, Michael & Eliza emphasise that they would not have been able to take the different steps to get to where they are today without a supportive farm owner. They contribute part of their success to having farm owners that want the share farmer to succeed and 'being on the same page' as them.



## **Brodie Chester and Kevin Game** **Lessee, Bega, New South Wales**

A shared passion for animals and love of the farming lifestyle attracted Brodie Chester and Kevin Game to the dairy industry. They met while working on a dairy farm and 7 years later, lease a farm together in Bega.

“Dairy farming is rewarding both on a personal and financial level. There are very few industries you can enter, grow your assets and skill base as quickly as dairy farming,” Brodie said.

When Kevin finished school, he completed a dairy apprenticeship and a Certificate IV in Dairy. Over 20 years Kevin has worked on several dairy farms, progressing from trainee, to farm management before becoming a lessee.

Brodie got her first taste of dairy farming through high school work experience. Before becoming a lessee, she worked at a few cattle studs and the livestock team at Landmark, Wagga Wagga.

In 2010 while working full time, Brodie and Kevin purchased 2 dairy cows and a single cow milker. “We milked the cows twice a day and used the milk to rear Holstein and XB bull calves. We found a market to sell the calves and purchased a further 3 cows to allow us to rear more calves,” Brodie said.

In 2012, Brodie and Kevin were offered a share farming position at Bega. They jumped at the opportunity and used funds from the calf sales to help purchase 100 cows.

“We had a short stint of share farming on our current farm before some unforeseen circumstances led us into our current lease agreement. Our arrangement was discussed with both parties – farm owner and lessee - and we ensured that the best interests of both parties were put in place,” Brodie said.

For over 2 years, Brodie and Kevin have been leasing the Bega property, milking 240 cows on 120 hectares. They work full time on-farm, managing a full time and a part time employee. As lessee, they are responsible for the daily operation of the whole farm business and work with a farm consultant who helps with the farm's production. They believe maintaining and improving

the farming landscape, while managing their resources sustainably, is an important aspect of their role.

To be a successful lessee, they believe a person must be hardworking, patient and passionate, “farming isn't something you can do easily unless you have passion. It's not a job, it's a lifestyle,” Brodie said.

Brodie and Kevin enjoy the opportunities that leasing provides, it allows them to have full control of the dairy operation, while providing them with time to pay off the herd.

“We have put our full time employee through a Certificate III in Dairy,” Brodie said. “As a young couple starting out - our heart and soul is in our business and it is really important for us to find employees that respect that.”

Off farm, the couple attend discussion groups held by Bega Cheese. Brodie is studying Agricultural Business Management at University and is the current Secretary of Dairy NSW Far South Coast Dairy Development Group. “These groups are vital. They not only get information out to farmers but also provide a social scene in which farmers can get off farm and interact,” she said.

The couple's future goal is to own their own farm, “ideally we will own our herd, producing high quality animals and milk - hopefully we're on our way to purchasing our own dairy farm.”

### **Brodie and Kevin's tips:**

- In a lessee arrangement, good communication is vital: without proper forms of communication, situations will be more stressful than they need to be
- There is no such thing as luck: it comes down to preparation and opportunity. We were prepared to take an opportunity when it was presented to us
- You can achieve anything but you need to get out there and do something about it: talk to farmers and get involved in groups and activities. The dairy industry is passionate about its young people, and most farmers are happy to support you along your journey





## Share Farmer or Lessee

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — Train others in correct milk harvesting techniques</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — organise the mating program and AI livestock, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff</li> <li>• <b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> —manage stored feed inventory, understand dietary requirements based on production, cost and availability, balance rations</li> <li>• <b>Pasture Production and Cropping</b> – determine the paddocks to lock up for fodder conservation and the most appropriate time to harvest, organise for purchase, delivery and application of fertilisers</li> <li>• <b>Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance</b> – maintain and develop stock handling equipment, shedding and feeding areas</li> <li>• <b>Administration</b> – manage accounts and tax requirements, set financial indicators and manage the farm budget, oversee the appointment of new employees, their induction, training, remuneration and performance appraisal, organise the communication system including staff meetings and whiteboards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management</li> <li>• Minimum of a Diploma of Agriculture (or equivalent)</li> <li>• High level people management skills</li> <li>• High level Business Management skills</li> <li>• Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements</li> <li>• Take responsibility for farm performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business</li> <li>• Staff management and leadership</li> <li>• Communicate with farm workers and source goods &amp; services external to the business</li> <li>• Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting</li> <li>• High level of responsibility and decision making</li> <li>• Negotiation skills &amp; conflict management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share farmers are regarded as 'Independent contractors'. They share the farm income</li> </ul>	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• <b>Industry</b> leadership programs</li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>For Share Farming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma of Agriculture</li> </ul>	<p><b>Share Farmer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33% Share – All mobile farm machinery</li> <li>• 50% Share – All mobile farm machinery and all stock</li> </ul> <p><b>Lessee:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lease property and own all mobile farm machinery and all stock</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessee</li> <li>• Farm Owner</li> </ul> <p><b>When Will I Be Ready?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depends on the resources and equity you have built up</li> </ul>

The Share Dairy Farming in Australia – Model Code of Practice has guidelines and tools for assessing share farming arrangements and is

available at [www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/sharefarming](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/sharefarming)

Information about leasing is available at [www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future/leasing](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future/leasing)

## Michael Giumelli

### Farm Owner, Harvey, Western Australia

Michael Giumelli is a fourth generation dairy farmer from Harvey. He started in the industry at a young age, helping his father on weekends and during school holidays.

After finishing school, Michael worked at a few local dairies where he completed a 12 month dairy apprenticeship and a Certificate III in Agriculture. In early 2003, a farmhand position became available on his parent's property at Dardanup. Michael decided this was a good opportunity to join his parents in the business.

"It was a natural progression. I must admit it didn't happen without its fair share of arguments over the earlier years. Over time, my father and I grew respect for each other and we made it work," Michael said.

In 2006, the family decided to expand and purchased another dairy farm near Harvey. Michael's father slowly withdrew from the day to day operation of the business and over 8 and a half years, Michael gradually took responsibility for the whole operation.

"I entered an operating family business. In terms of becoming a farm owner, this was transitioned over the years as part of a succession plan created by my parents," he said.

Michael has been managing the family farm with his wife Sophia for 9 years, which is also home to their 3 young children, "they fancy themselves being farmers when they grow up," Michael said.

The farm milks 350 cows on 217 hectares with a further 232 hectares of leased land. Michael oversees the whole dairy operation and manages 2 full time farmhands. He is responsible for cow health, feeding and reproduction as well as dry cow, young stock and replacement heifer duties, plus farm, machinery maintenance and construction.

As part of his role, Michael ensures the business remains financially viable; he plans future tasks and purchases materials for the ongoing operation of the

farm. He uses a computerised farm management system and engages a financial consultant to track the operation's finances and future projections.

Michael believes resilience, innovation, intuition, and an ability to cope with different challenges are the key to being a successful farm owner. He appreciates that his role also has some challenges, such as tight margins and timeframes to complete tasks.

"I enjoy seeing positive results from decisions that I have made. Being my own boss and being flexible with my time is very important to me. I'm spread pretty thin between a dairy business, a gelato business and being a father but I love every second of it," he said.

In 2011, Michael was selected in the Developing Dairy Leaders Program (DDLDP). The program provides training to potential future leaders working in the dairy industry.

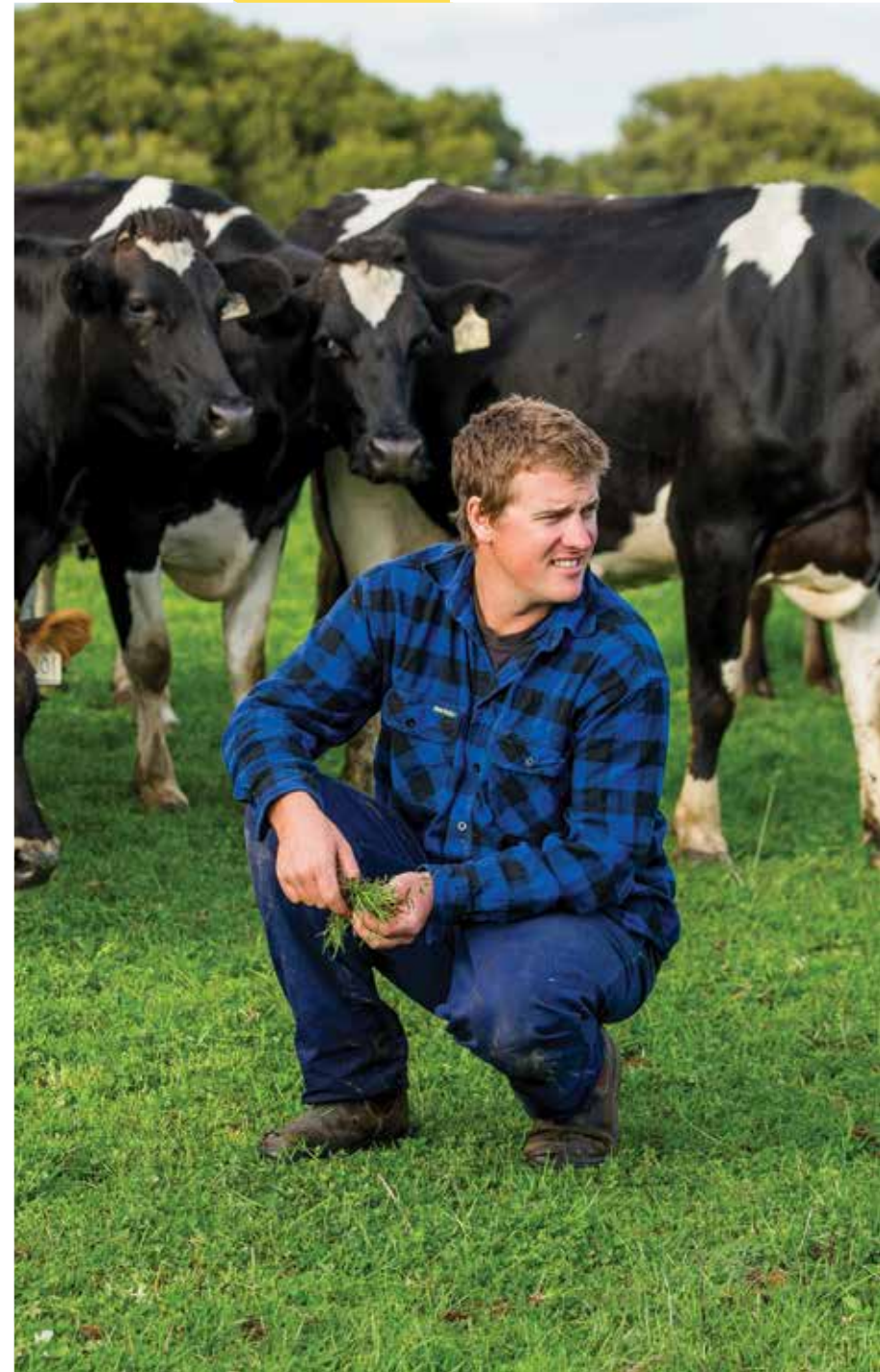
"It was a fantastic experience and I learnt so many new things. I met other people working in the dairy industry from across the country and from different parts of the industry," he said.

With 13 years of dairy farming experience, Michael plans to keep processing the family business. "We would like to keep improving in all aspects and make the business more profitable. Our goal is to grow our assets so we can have a comfortable retirement and also help our children in whatever career direction they wish to pursue."

"Another goal is to enjoy the wonderful lifestyle of dairy farming and reap the rewards that it has to offer."

#### Michael's advice to people thinking about farm ownership:

- Work hard - efficiency is the key
- Learn from your experiences and also the experiences of others - draw on these to improve your skills for the future





## Rob Cooper

### Farm Owner, Tamworth, New South Wales

Rob Cooper has been dairy farming for 31 years. Growing up in Tasmania, he was introduced to agriculture through his uncle and grandparents who owned dairy farms. “I hadn’t done a lot of work on dairy farms, only some when I stayed with my grandparents,” Rob said. “After finishing year 12, I had a year off and found an agriculture course in Sydney that really interested me.”

While studying, Rob worked weekends and holidays at a local dairy farm. When he finished, he was offered an assistant manager position on a large dairy back in Tasmania. After 3 years, Rob successfully applied for The University of Minnesota’s MAST International exchange program.

“I went to Arizona and worked on a large dairy; I was fortunate to work with some of the best dairy farm managers in the U.S,” he said. “I went from a Tasmanian dairy farm on 100% grazing to working in Arizona milking 6000 cows in a intensively housed system. It was a good experience and I would encourage any young person to do the same.”

Rob then travelled to England, working on different dairies as a relief milker. After 6 months, he accepted a farm manager role on a 2000 cow corporate dairy farm outside of Sydney. Rob managed the farm for 3 years and when it was sold, decided to step up to share farming.

“I wanted to do something for myself. I had nothing starting out, so I went into a 40% share and bought some machinery and cows. It was a small farm milking 130 cows, but I had the opportunity to the grow cow numbers and build equity – which is certainly an advantage of share farming.”

After 12 years of share farming, Rob took a break from the industry. After 12 months, he had an opportunity to join an equity partnership for a dairy farm near Tamworth.

“I knew of someone who tried to buy the farm. The owners weren’t interested in selling so we came up with other options and I joined as an equity partner. With an equity arrangement, all parties can invest and

share in the capital improvements. 3 brothers own the original farm – the 4 of us have started a new company. Over 10 years, we’ve expanded the operation from 1400 to 3230 hectares and have taken cow numbers from 400 to 1200.”

Rob’s position in the partnership sees him managing the whole farm operation. He oversees 11 employees, supervises calving and sick cows, coordinates feeding and feed allocation, plans paddock operations and also manages the business’ bookwork.

To manage a farm, Rob believes a person must be organised and have good communication skills. He engages a range of consultants including a nutritionist, agronomist, veterinarian and a farm management consultant, and values short courses: “I’ve done most courses available through Dairy Australia, hoof trimming and animal husbandry courses in the U.S. and a few financial courses.”

Over the next 5 years, Rob aims to expand, “We’ll increase production by another 50%. We’ve purchased the property next door so we’re in the process of getting that dairy farm up and running. After that, we’ll concentrate on consolidating the whole operation.”

#### Rob’s tips:

- Expand your experience base: try to work on different farms in different locations, under different management styles
- Complete short courses: courses such as hoof trimming, pregnancy testing and artificial insemination build important skills
- Build management skills: focus on how you are going to manage an operation; build a framework to manage a farm rather than doing it ad-hoc
- Organise yourself: to manage staff and paperwork, you need to plan how you are going to approach each day; plan how you are going to communicate and work with staff
- Learn finance and purchasing skills: learn how to budget and be able to stick to it





## Stuart Murray

### Farm Owner, Bamawm, Victoria

Stuart Murray grew up on a dairy in Northern Victoria however, his parents were not dairy farmers themselves; “My parents farmed in this area - they were involved in mixed broad acre farming with Merino sheep, beef cattle and cereal. I grew up on a dairy farm but where we lived was not where my parents did their business. They invested in the property where we now farm and had a share farmer,” Stuart said.

After school, Stuart attended Agricultural College and majored in beef husbandry before returning to work with his parents as a broad acre farmhand. At 27 years old, Stuart and his wife Louise became partners with his parents by buying into the business.

Stuart found stepping up to farm ownership a natural progression and he increased his ownership of stock; “I was not only buying dairy cattle but I was buying sheep and beef cattle as well, and I was also purchasing machinery,” he said.

“My initial step into dairy farming came when my parents suggested they needed to sell the farm to fund their retirement; so I had to make a decision as to which direction I was going to go. Louise and I looked at the different industries we had been exposed to and decided dairy farming could afford us the lifestyle that we wanted to live.”

In 1990, Stuart purchased his parent's remaining share of the dairy. He continued to lease the farm for 3 years before purchasing his first 60 hectare dairy farm in 1993; “It was easy to transfer from sheep to dairy cattle, it was more of a transfer of assets. We started with 160 milking cows and associated young stock. It was challenging but the rewards were great, both financially and production wise.”

Over 20 years, the Murrys have grown the operation to milk 600 cows on 150 hectares, with a further 700 hectares of associated land. As farm owner, Stuart's role is focussed on ‘bigger picture’ business management while staying active on the farm. Stuart and Louise work full time alongside a mechanic, 3 farmhands and a share farmer who has lived and worked on the farm for 2 years. While the share farmer is responsible for livestock management, Stuart manages agronomy and feed.

“I love it. I enjoy the business side as much as I do the stock work,” Stuart said. “We identified a need to have somebody other than myself and Louise who is responsible. The share farming model suited us better than a herd management model where we employ someone on a salary. I'm passionate about the viability of the dairy industry – we have to provide a pathway for our future dairy farmers to become farm owners.”

Stuart admits maintaining the right balance between growing assets and investing in production is a key challenge. Over the years, the Murrys have completed a range of industry courses and employ an agronomist, nutritionist, business manager and financial consultant who provide expert advice.

“There are multiple facets to running this business - there's employer/employee relationships, human resources, natural resources, livestock, taxation, investment and nutritional issues. Plus there's the day to day training in regard to occupational health and safety for you and your staff,” Stuart said.

The Murray's future aim is to build their business assets. Stuart is currently working to establish a local Young Dairy Network to support, encourage and educate young dairy farmers in the region; “the future of the industry is very promising so it's important that we have these networks,” he said.

“I would like to remain an investor in the industry and a promoter of the industry. The dairy industry has a lot of potential and it needs people to sell that potential - maybe that's where my role in the future will come.”

#### Stuart's tips:

- Start small and grow: don't expect to have all the skills you need before you start - skills are gained by making mistakes, farming in different environments and with different limitations
- The key to a successful share farmer/farm owner relationship - good communication, having defined goals and sharing in the profits
- Build your people skills: as we have expanded, human resource management has become an important skill to have



## Farm Owner

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<p>Tasks will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milk Harvesting</b> — Train others in correct milk harvesting techniques</li> <li>• <b>Animal Husbandry</b> — organise the mating program and AI livestock, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff</li> <li>• <b>Feed Management and Delivery</b> — manage stored feed inventory, understand dietary requirements based on production, cost and availability, balance rations</li> <li>• <b>Pasture Production and Cropping</b> - determine the paddocks to lock up for fodder conservation and the most appropriate time to harvest, organise for purchase, delivery and application of fertilisers</li> <li>• <b>Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance</b> - maintain and develop stock handling equipment, shedding and feeding areas</li> <li>• <b>Administration</b> - manage accounts and tax requirements, set financial indicators and manage the farm budget, oversee the appointment of new employees, their induction, training, remuneration and performance appraisal, organise the communication system including staff meetings and whiteboards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management</li> <li>• Minimum of a Diploma of Agriculture (or equivalent)</li> <li>• High level people management skills</li> <li>• High level Business Management skills</li> <li>• Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements</li> <li>• Take responsibility for farm performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business</li> <li>• Staff management and leadership</li> <li>• Communicate with farm workers and source goods &amp; services external to the business</li> <li>• Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting</li> <li>• High level of responsibility and decision making</li> <li>• Negotiation skills &amp; conflict management</li> </ul>	<p>Depends on farm size and productivity</p>	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community</li> <li>• <b>Industry Leadership</b> programs</li> <li>• Young Dairy Networks -which run events for your young staff</li> <li>• Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma of Agriculture</li> <li>• Registered Training Organisations (RTO)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your Farm</li> <li>• Milking Shed and all equipment needed to run the farm system</li> <li>• Livestock</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase your involvement in Dairy Industry; e.g. RDP Board, Dairy Farmer organisation and other industry boards, Leadership programs.</li> </ul>

**Note:** If you are farm owner looking at moving out of active dairy farming see [www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future/introduction.htm](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future/introduction.htm)

Stepping Stones 2019

26







# Planning Your Dairy Career – Example

## Career Vision:

Where do I want to get to with my Dairy Career?

50% Share Farmer

How long will it take me to get there?

10 Years

## Where Am I Now?

What is your Current Role?

Assistant Farmhand

How long have you been doing the role?

1 year

What level of training have you achieved to date?

Certificate II including 'Cups On Cups Off'

When will you be ready for the next step in your Dairy Career?

(use the Stepping Stone tables as a guide)

I am ready to take the next step to the Farmhand level

## Longer Term Planning – Resources and Money

If your plan includes Share Farming then you need to start building resources (e.g. equipment) and your bank balance.

Fill out the table to get an idea of the money involved in getting ready for share farming

The Stepping Stones program will provide a way to get financial and business management advice

Resource	Cost	When
Quad bike	\$10,000	Next year
Tractor	\$80,000	2 years
Other farm equipment	\$100,000	5 years
Cows. Eg. 350 cows and young stock	\$450,000	10 years

## Short Term Planning

What is your Next Role?

Farm Hand

Senior Farm Hand

Farm Production Manager

Farm Business Manager

Share Farmer

What training and experience do you need?

I need to get to Cert III Ag

What level of finances and/or farm equipment do I need to acquire?

Aim to have \$2000 saved by the end of the year

Action	When
Discuss my advancement with the farm owner	Next week
Enrol in Cert III Ag	2 weeks
Start saving	Now

## Longer Term Planning – Training and Experience

What AQF level do you need to achieve to enable your Career Vision

Cert III Ag

Cert IV Ag

Diploma Ag

Advanced Diploma Ag

AQF Quals

How many years will it take to get the AQF level you need?

6 Years

What contacts do you need to make to allow you to work in the various farm roles along the way to your career vision?

-VDN -RDP events

Action	When
Join the VDN	3 weeks
Look up the RDP website and find out the upcoming events	1 week
Sit down with my current boss and seek his/her advice on next steps	Next week



# Planning Your Dairy Career

Career Vision:

Where do I want to get to with my Dairy Career?

How long will it take me to get there?

Where Am I Now?

What is your Current Role?

How long have you been doing the role?

What level of training have you achieved to date?

When will you be ready for the next step in your Dairy Career?  
(use the Stepping Stone tables as a guide)

Short Term Planning

What is your Next Role?  

Farm HandSenior Farm HandFarm Production ManagerFarm Business ManagerShare Farmer

What training and experience do you need?

What level of finances and/or farm equipment do I need to acquire?

Action	When

Longer Term Planning – Resources and Money

If your plan includes Share Farming then you need to start building resources (e.g. equipment) and your bank balance.

Fill out the table to get an idea of the money involved in getting ready for share farming

The Stepping Stones program will provide a way to get financial and business management advice

Resource	Cost	When
Quad bike		
Tractor		
Other farm equipment		
Cows		

Longer Term Planning – Training and Experience

What AQF level do you need to achieve to enable your Career Vision  

Cert III AgCert IV AgDiploma AgAdvanced Diploma AgAQF Quals

How many years will it take to get the AQF level you need?

What contacts do you need to make to allow you to work in the various farm roles along the way to your career vision?

Action	When





**Dairy Australia Limited** ABN 60 105 227 987  
Level 3, HWT Tower  
40 City Road, Southbank VIC 3006 Australia T  
+ 61 3 9694 3777 F + 61 3 9694 3701 E  
[enquiries@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:enquiries@dairyaustralia.com.au)  
[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)