



Stepping Stones

Career pathways in the New South Wales 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 New South Wales, 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.

Read about farmers like Scott Hurrell, a Farm Business Manager who grew up on a dairy farm at Comboyne. The farm milks 730 cows on 250 hectares and employs 7 people. Scott studied finance at University and worked overseas for 8 years before returning to realise his dream of being a dairy farmer. Scott and his brother have stepped up as their parents plan to retire. Scott loves overseeing the business and plans to develop the farm, ensuring the most profitable business model and a structure for business succession.

Or read about Alexz Crawford, a passionate Milker employed on a dairy farm with 400 cows on 360 acres. Rather than going to 'schoolies', he bought his first cow and won the Brown Swiss Junior Champion title at the 2015 Sydney Royal Easter Show. Alexz is looking forward to completing his study and taking a holiday, while his long term aim is to operate his own farm.

Stepping Stones can be downloaded from:
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.

About 700 dairy farms in NSW produce around 1 billion litres of milk a year, which equates to 11% of Australia's milk production.*

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 – dairy provides a career for life.

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 like Dairy NSW.

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

Dairy Australia

03 9694 3777

www.dairyaustralia.com.au

www.thepeopleindairy.org.au

Dairy NSW

02 9351 1737

info@dairynsw.com.au

www.dairynsw.com.au

*Australian Dairy Industry In Focus 2014 (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 on page 3 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 Dairy NSW programs
- Learn about dairy industry scholarships

Contacts for further information

Dairy Australia

www.dairyaustralia.com.au

Dairy NSW

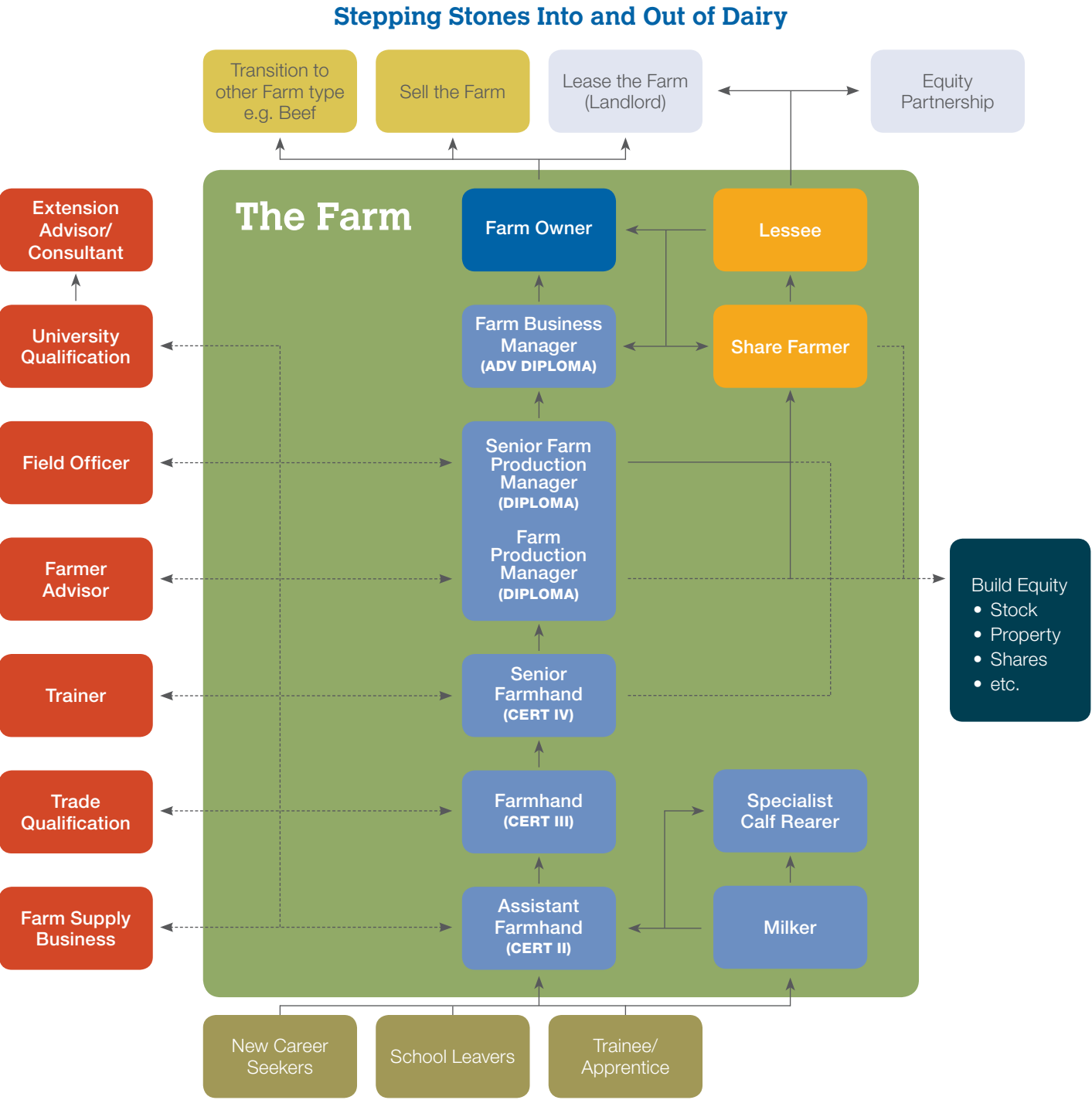
www.dairynsw.com.au

**Dairy NSW has a network of mentors who may be able to help.*



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.





Alexz Crawford Milker/Apprentice, Brundee

Alexz Crawford grew up on a family dairy farm at Brundee, just outside of Nowra; “When I was young I’d wake up early on weekends to work with my Pa and Uncle,” he said. “I love the dairy industry. It’s in my blood – I love the cows and I’m a real animal person.”

During high school, Alexz took up the opportunity to work with his neighbours, Tom and Kyleigh Cochrane, who own a 400 cow, 360 acre dairy. “As Dad and I were going into town one day, we drove past Tom who was doing silage. Tom yelled out if I wanted to give him a hand and I got a job that afternoon.”

Alexz has been working on the Cochrane family farm for 5 years. Initially, he worked weekends and during school holidays before becoming a full time apprentice when he finished Year 12.

Rather than celebrating ‘schoolies’ week, Alexz purchased his first cow, a Brown Swiss Heifer. This decision paid off as he returned from the 2015 Sydney Royal Easter Show with the Brown Swiss Junior Champion title.

Alexz enjoys his job because every day is different. He believes to work on a farm, a person must have good communication skills, be reliable, responsible and open to learning. Alexz has a good working relationship with the Farm Owners and their 3 employees, whom he continues to learn from.

“Tom’s been really supportive; everything I want to learn, he is more than willing to teach me. I just try to soak it all in,” Alexz said. “I’m lucky I have good bosses that have been supportive and have really tried to help me get into the dairy industry.”

“If I work in the morning, I get up at 4.30am to milk and I’m finished by around 8am. I go home for breakfast and back to the farm at 9am to do jobs. If I milk in the afternoon, I start at 2pm and finish around 6pm. Sometimes I wonder why I’m getting out of bed at 4am – I do it because I love it and I can’t see myself doing anything else.”

In the second year of his apprenticeship, Alexz has completed a Certificate III of Dairy Production and recently commenced a Certificate IV and Diploma of Agriculture through Tocal.

“I study in a one week block, once every 6 weeks at college. It’s both practical and theoretical – you’re always learning and picking up new things.”

Outside of work, Alexz attends industry short courses with the support of Tom and Kyleigh. “If there are courses on, it’s good to go and learn. I wanted to do an Artificial Insemination (AI) course and Tom paid half of the course fee. I’ve done a hoof care course and there is an opportunity to do a pregnancy testing course which I’ll do.”

In the short term, Alexz is looking forward to completing his study and travelling to America next year for a holiday; while his long term aim is to operate his own farm.

“I really love the breeding side of dairy. I have 4 cows, so I’m slowly starting,” he said. “I’d like to be a farm manager and eventually move into farm ownership one day, if the opportunity comes up.”

Alexz’s tips:

- Be confident in yourself and in handling big animals
- You can’t choose your jobs each day; be willing to complete a range of tasks
- Talk to your boss and employees – be open to learn from others
- Every farm is different. Be open-minded and adaptable, different methods work for different farms
- Sometimes things go wrong, but you have to deal with it and move forward
- You need people skills and have to get along with other employees in the team
- You can’t buy a farm straight away; you have to earn your stripes and work your way up. Then when you’re ready, if an opportunity comes up to progress, you have to jump on it.



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

*Check the latest pay rates at www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/payrates

Sarah Redgrove Calf Rearer, Hunter Valley

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

*Check the latest pay rates at www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/payrates

Linda Buckley Assistant Farmhand, Camden

Linda Buckley has been dairy farming for 16 years. She works as an Assistant Farmhand at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) at Camden. Linda has been in the position for 2 years, milking 150 cows on 100 hectares, with an additional 200 hectares for dry cows and weaner heifers.

Linda does not come from a dairy farming background. In 1990, Linda's husband David purchased 2 Jersey heifers at a sale, which they gradually grew to 6 cows.

"We purchased a portable milking machine to milk the cows and fed the milk to the calves," Linda said. "Then in 1999, an opportunity came up to lease a farm and buy the herd on what is now known as the Camden Town Farm and from there, our dairy lives began."

Linda and David leased the farm for 3 years, milking 70 cows on 150 acres and in 2003, they decided to milk on their own 25 acre property.

"We modified our existing shed to a 6 bay walk through. We put a feed pad in and cut the herd size down to 40. We also used a neighbour's property for grazing," Linda said.

Running the dairy was a family affair with Linda and David working alongside their son, Patrick. Linda admits it was intense farming as all the feed was brought onto the property, there was not a lot of land for grazing and they all maintained full time jobs.

"Patrick and I would mainly do the milking and calf rearing. David would source feed, silage, hay and distribute it out," Linda said. "We all worked off farm as well; David as a high school teacher, Patrick worked at EMAI and I worked for Bonds (Pacific Brands) for approximately 14 years."

In 2012, Linda left Pacific Brands and heard that EMAI was looking to employ a Milker, so she made a few calls and started working 2 days later.

"When I started at EMAI, I was mainly milking then I progressively worked day shifts and started helping out with the day to day running of the farm," she said.

Linda works alongside 6 other staff members. As an Assistant Farmhand, she is required to complete a range of daily tasks to ensure the dairy is running smoothly – from milking cows and feeding calves, to driving tractors, fencing, moving cattle and some office work.

On top of working at EMAI, Linda also helps Patrick who took over the family dairy in 2013 with his partner, April. In December 2014, Patrick and April leased land in the Macarthur Region where they milk 140 cows on 245 acres.

"They leased a dairy farm at The Oaks which is working extremely well. I help out there when needed. At home we have the calves and weaner heifers that I look after," Linda said.

Over the years, Linda has been actively involved in the industry by participating in local cattle shows and the Sydney Royal Show. She is also completing an Artificial Insemination (AI) course through The National Herd Improvement Association.

Linda enjoys her job and would like to continue working at EMAI. In the long term, she is considering further education and training opportunities in dairy.



Assistant Farmhand

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

Alex Cowhan Farmhand, Forbes

Alex Cowhan grew up on a family dairy farm 20kms west of Forbes. “I loved going to the dairy after school and feeding the calves,” she said. “From there, it just grew and I started working on the weekends.”

When she finished school, Alex completed a Certificate II in Agriculture and worked full time at her Uncle’s dairy doing general jobs such as milking and fencing. In 2009, her Uncle sold the property and Alex moved back to work alongside her parents Peter and Lindy and younger sister, Ellie on their family farm.

The property milks 280 cows on 500 acres, with 300 acres of irrigation and a further 460 acres for heifer rearing and fodder production. The farm is pasture based and the Cowhan family aim to grow all the forage for their cow ration.

Alex starts each day at 5am to milk. She then completes a range of seasonal jobs – such as fencing, mixing feed, silage, haymaking, irrigation, herd health and calf rearing – before milking again at 3pm. As part of her role, Alex also works with consultants who visit the farm to provide advice on agronomy and feed, and oversees casual employees.

“As my knowledge of the dairy industry grew, my responsibilities grew with the progression of my role,” Alex said. “I love coming to work everyday and working with my family and cattle.”

Alex values the flexibility of her role “I bring my kids to work and my mum looks after them while I’m working. They love getting out to the farm and feeding the calves.”

Alex appreciates that her role also has challenges such as early mornings, working with livestock in different weather conditions and monitoring cow health. She believes to be a Farmhand a person must be willing to work long hours, patient and open to learning.

Alex is always learning on the job and recently completed a Diploma of Agriculture. She has also completed Artificial Insemination training, Feeding Pastures for Profit, chemical certification and Cups On Cups Off (COCO).

“I enrolled to study Agriculture at University – it wasn’t for me because it was too far away from home. I’ve been able to get the same accreditation while working full time and having a family,” she said.

Outside of work, Alex is involved in the local industry through Dairy NSW’s Inland Elite Dairy Group and is also involved in Dairy Australia’s Farm Monitor Project, “the project is a good way to monitor all the areas of your business to identify your strengths, weaknesses and what you’ve got to work on,” she said.

Alex loves her job and she wishes to continue working for the family business. As well as owning a rental home in Forbes, she recently purchased 100 acres of rural land adjoining the main dairy block which is leased to the dairy business.

In the short term, Alex is considering completing further study while her long term aim is to step up her role; “I’d like to complete a Diploma of Vocational Education and Training so I could teach Agriculture. It will take a couple of years but it’s something I can work towards,” Alex said. “Currently, I’m happy being an employee – I enjoy stepping up while Mum and Dad travel. In 10 years’ time I would be ready to move up if they’re ready to retire or want to step back from work.”

Alex’s tip:

If you’re thinking about a career in dairy: Get some experience while at school, learn all the day to day activities and what’s involved on a farm. If you enjoy it, you can then go onto further training – training can open a lot of doors.



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

Nick Reid Senior Farmhand, Wingham

Nick Reid grew up on a family farm located at Kyabram, Northern Victoria. “I love working with cows and being outdoors. There’s never smooth sailing in agriculture – I like the challenges that it presents. It’s an exciting career,” Nick said.

When Nick finished school, he completed a mechanical fitter apprenticeship and worked on the family farm as a Farmhand. After 4 years, he took some time off to backpack overseas. When he returned, Nick moved to Western Australia where he worked for the Police for 3 years.

“After the Police Force, I went back to the family farm and worked for 6 years,” Nick said. “I did everything from herd health, breeding cows to harvesting silage. It was a big farm with about 700 cows.”

Newly married, Nick decided to travel back to WA to work in the mining industry so he could save some money and he also did some casual agriculture work.

After 6 years of mining, Nick decided to move with his wife and 3 children to Wingham on the mid-North Coast of NSW to be closer to his wife’s parents.

“I applied for a milking job in the paper and I got right back into it. I’ve been on the same farm since, working full time,” he said.

The farm milks 800 cows on 600 hectares and employees 13 people. Nick has been on the farm for 4 years and has progressively increased his responsibilities; he completes irrigation, pasture preparation and planning, and manages all the maintenance requirements of running a dairy operation. He also teaches and mentors young staff members.

“I look after anything outdoors. I’ve also done some herd management between herd managers. I pride myself on being versatile – being able to step in and help out when needed, and being able to identify problems before they happen.”

Over the years, Nick has completed a variety of industry courses including Countdown 2020, Target Ten, Feeding Pastures for Profit and Artificial Insemination (AI), and he plans to do a hoof trimming course in future.

Nick believes the qualities required to be a Senior Farmhand are flexibility, problem solving skills, a love of animals and working outdoors. “You must have a problem solving personality – if you’re presented with a challenge, you have to be able to think about it, identify the issues and find a resolution,” Nick said.

Nick appreciates that working with livestock in a constantly changing environment can be challenging. He adapts to the elements and is required to make important decisions quickly. Monitoring cow health and preventing mastitis are also important elements of his role.

With a love of farming life, Nick’s short term aim is to buy some cows to start building his own herd. “It’s a fantastic lifestyle, I wouldn’t be doing anything else,” he said. “If start building a young herd, I could lease them to the farm I’m working on now. I could then continue to lease the cows or take the next step and lease a farm.”

Nick’s tips:

- The industry is changing rapidly: good dairy farm employees (like Farmhands) are valuable
- If you’re wanting to start in the industry do some relief milking – it’s a good skill, provides an extra income stream, brings you into the work environment and gives you responsibility. And if you like it, it can be a gateway to a traineeship or other opportunities.
- Talk to agronomists, dairy technicians and vets: soak up any knowledge that you can. Talk to people – they are usually happy to give information.
- You don’t have to rush out and buy a farm: start by buying a few cows and build a herd. If you build your herd to 50 cows, it’s a big asset – it will provide a gateway to possibly leasing a farm one day.



Senior Farmhand

The Role	Prerequisites	Skills Needed	Rewards	Regional Support Programs	Training Options	Resources Needed	Next Career Step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk Harvesting — organise and oversee staff involved in the dairy operation, oversee the milk quality assurance program and OH&S program • Animal Husbandry — administer drenches, vaccines, mineral supplements and other appropriate animal husbandry • Monitor the reproductive performance of the herd • Feed Management and Delivery — set up, operate and monitor concentrate feed equipment, determine the most appropriate time to graze fodder crops • Pasture Production and Cropping – determine paddock rotation for optimum pasture utilisation, follow weed management policy • Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance – oversee the maintenance program for farm vehicles, equipment and implements • Supervise the OH+S practices on farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like working with animals • Like working as part of a team • Like working outdoors • Like working with machinery • Happy to work as part of the farm roster with weekend work included • Able to stand and work for extended periods during milk harvesting • Honesty and reliability, for example, turning up for work on time • Be computer literate in regard to report writing and financial management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and care with the animals • Ability to take initiative and work independently • Being a team player • Taking pride in the work and workplace • Be able to supervise staff and staff training • Communication skills and the ability to resolve conflicts 	Around \$40,000 to \$50,000	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community • Dairy Australia Developing Dairy Leaders Program – Tier 1 • Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers • Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	<p>For Senior Farmhand/ Farm Supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cert IV in Agriculture • Cups on Cups Off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers licence • Transport • Keep building your dairy assets • Keep building stock • Think about farm equipment purchases 	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm Production Manager <p>When Will I Be Ready?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 3-5 years experience for Farm Production Manager • Completed Cert IV in Agriculture

Marty Downes

Farm Production Manager (in training), Nowra

Born and bred into dairy, Marty Downes' parents leased a dairy farm at Dunmore, South of Wollongong, before moving when he was 7 years old.

"We moved to Berry and that's where I met Paul Timbs," Marty said. "I worked on Paul's farm on weekends and after school. I was always milking and helping out on the farm, we also showed cows when we could."

When Marty finished school, he completed a Certificate IV of Agriculture full time and worked as a Farmhand on a mixed farm at Boorowa.

After a year, Marty travelled back to the coast and worked on a 500 cow dairy at Albion Park. He worked on the farm for 6 years. As his skills increased, he gained more responsibility and progressed to a Senior Farmhand position; "The farm had 2 dairies; as a Farmhand, I looked after the cows, monitored the farm and oversaw the younger staff," he said.

In late 2014, Marty returned to his hometown of Berry and was offered a position working again with Paul Timbs, milking 240 cows on 80 hectares. Marty has worked full time on the farm for 8 months and has a goal to progress to the position of Farm Production Manager.

"Farming is always a learning curve. At the moment my aim is to slowly progress to a point where I'll be able to manage the farm and physically do everything that is involved in dairy," he said.

Marty works alongside Paul and oversees 2 casual employees. The business also engages a local consultant who helps with the farm's breeding programs; "At the moment I learn from Paul, but it's also important for me to get to know the herd. Over the next year or so, I will also learn about the finance side of the business, such as costs and profit and loss statements – it will take me a while to get a hang of it all."

Marty is always learning and he enjoys the responsibilities of his role; he likes managing the herd, breeding and keeping track of production. He admits there are challenges like trying to manage his workload, "a challenge is keeping on top of things, there's never enough time in the day," he said.

Marty believes that pasture management, herd management, and having happy and healthy cows are key to being a successful Farm Production Manager, "you need to make sure that the cows are healthy, that they are getting the right amount of feed, and that they are always vaccinated and drenched," he said.

Outside of work, Marty is involved in the Young Dairy Network Australia (YDNA) and is currently working to establish a local dairy group, the South Coast and Tablelands Community.

Marty's short term aim is to continue learning on farm and to breed his own cows, "my main focus is to have a good milking cow," he said.

His long term goal is to lease the farm, "the idea is to slowly progress and work my way up to own part of the herd. And then, slowly over time, buy some machinery and lease the farm."

Marty's tip:

There are employment opportunities in the dairy industry for a wide range of people: while at school, get involved in dairy farming by working on a farm casually or on weekends. Then if you're interested, after year 12 you can do a traineeship, a science degree in agriculture, or a farm management course.



Adam Forbes Herd Manager, Gloucester

Adam Forbes grew up on a family dairy farm. "Dairy is extremely satisfying and has made me the person I am today," he said.

Adam started feeding calves, and as he got older, progressed to milking on weekends and after school. At 16 years old, he completed an Artificial Insemination (AI) course and as his farm skills increased, so did his herd management responsibilities.

After school Adam took a gap year, he worked on dairies in New Zealand and completed a Certificate III of Agriculture. When he returned, he enrolled in a Bachelor of Applied Science, majoring in Animal Production in Queensland.

While studying, Adam relief milked, worked with stud breeders and helped out on the family farm during holidays. He also completed University work placements with an agronomist and a large dairy operation in Mount Gambier; "I took so much away from the placements – they certainly helped with my progression toward management," he said.

Since graduating in 2014, Adam has enjoyed being back on the 1700 acre family farm, calving 800 cows.

He works alongside his parents, 10 employees and learns from farm consultants who provide expert advice on nutrition, agronomy, reproduction and breeding. Adam is responsible for the staff milking team, reproductive management of the herd, calf and heifer rearing. He ensures the cows are milked daily while maximising milk quality, employee safety and efficiency, and promoting animal health and welfare.

Adam identifies sick and lame cows, conducts AI and pregnancy testing. He is also responsible for calving and colostrum. He ensures the calves are fed, vaccinated, and drenched – all while assisting his father, Graham, with pasture management and feed allocation.

Adam likes that his job is varied; he especially enjoys learning and working with cows. He appreciates there can be challenges like working in extreme weather

conditions, managing herd health and rostering; "I try to give employees their own responsibilities, allowing them to grow and move up the ranks," he said.

Most employees have completed Dairy NSW's lameness workshop and the Forbes family hold team meetings that focus on training. A trainee is completing a Certificate III in Agriculture. Adam also visits the college to work with Certificate III students.

Adam attends Dairy NSW workshops and youth events. He has completed cattle assessments, lameness and hoof trimming courses and also attends Dairy Australia's Focus Farms. The Forbes family is hosting an upcoming herd health and reproduction field day; "networking and dairy discussion groups are a vital part of the industry. You can learn something from everyone!" he said. "I've just returned from a trip to Western Victoria, organised by our local dairy discussion group. We visited a number of fantastic farms, research facilities and Dairy Australia – it was great and I've come back with plenty of ideas!"

Adam plans to continue growing the business with the possibility of progressing into a partnership with his parents, "I hope to further embrace technology and farm in a profitable and sustainable way. I also hope to raise my family here as there's no better place to grow up than on a dairy farm!"

Adam's tips:

- Essentials: be patient, level headed, have problem solving skills, good people skills and love cows!
- Dairy has a multitude of opportunities – as long as you're willing to listen, learn, work hard and out of your comfort zone!
- Surround yourself with knowledgeable people – vets, consultants, successful farmers and your superiors are the best people to seek advice on situations or how to progress to the next step.
- Find a mentor (or 2) – someone you can rely on for advice or bounce ideas off
- Seek out information – read as much as you can, visit Internet sites and forums daily



Tom Pearce Herd Manager, Bega

Tom Pearce began in the dairy industry helping his father after school and on weekends. As a fourth generation dairy farmer, Tom knew from a young age that he wanted to work on Warwick Farm, a dairy his family has operated for 100 years.

Owned by Tom's parents, Norm and Narelle, Warwick Farm milks 240 cows on 940 acres with a total herd size of 550. It also includes the family's stud, Warwick Farm Holsteins and Tom's Progressive Holsteins.

After finishing school in 2004, Tom worked on Warwick Farm as a Farmhand and part time for a herd improvement company. He found he had a particular passion for genetics: "so I grew my interest in the industry on the breeding and genetics side of things," he said.

Over a number of years, Tom progressively gained more responsibility for the farm's breeding programs, heifer raising and pasture management. In 2009, he spent 5 months travelling North America, working voluntarily on dairy farms and attending dairy shows to further increase his skills. In 2010, he became Herd Manager and implemented his new knowledge to Warwick Farm.

Tom enjoys the responsibilities of being Herd Manager. No two days are the same; he is responsible for springer monitoring and management, mastitis control and mating programs. Tom also manages irrigation, repairs and maintenance, and oversees the general daily management of the farm. He manages and works alongside a part time and 3 full time employees.

"Seeing the quality of our herd improve with each new generation provides great satisfaction," Tom said. "Silage season is also satisfying, when you can look over the farm and see freshly cut paddocks and bales being made."

Tom appreciates that working with livestock in a changing environment can be challenging. He starts early in the morning and is required to work late when monitoring calving cows. Cow health is also a vital part of Tom's role; he is responsible for monitoring the herd and making important decisions in regards to herd health, mastitis control and mating programs.

To be a successful a Herd Manager, Tom believes a person must be accountable, have attention to detail, be committed and have a good work ethic. He has completed an Artificial Insemination (AI) course as well as a Diploma of Agriculture.

Outside of work, Tom is actively involved in the industry and is passionate about encouraging the next generation of dairy farmers. He took part in the 2011 Australian Rural Leadership TRIAL Program, has been a camp leader with the National All Dairy Breeds Youth Camp, and has presented to local school students through Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers project.

With a love of the show arena, Tom was chosen to be on Holstein Australia's NSW Senior Judges Panel in 2013, and is an active member of Dairy NSW's Far South Coast Dairy Development Group and local discussion groups.

With 11 years of dairy farming experience under his belt, Tom enjoys his role and plans to continue improving the family farm and herd. In the short term, he is considering completing a farm management course, "My long term goal is to chase efficiency and utilise new technology to make the farm more productive – and breed an animal that leaves a lasting impression on the dairy industry."

Tom's advice:

- Understand what it takes to make a dairy farm tick: it is not just cupping up cows – get to know your herd
- Keep up to date, read dairy farmer magazines and breed journals
- Don't forget to have time away from the cows!



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"> • Milk Harvesting — Identify and correct problems in the machine function and operation • Animal Husbandry — select cows for AI and assist with bull selection, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff • Feed Management and Delivery — set the rotation and oversee the delivery to all livestock, oversee the sourcing and reticulation of water to livestock to meet their requirements • Pasture Production and Cropping – determine the soil fertiliser program using soil fertility and production data, determine nitrogen applications based on seasonal conditions • Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance – 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 • Administration – ensure the farm is compliant with workplace legislation, organise rosters and allocate tasks • Staff management recruitment – recruitment, selection, induction, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management • Minimum of a Certificate IV in Agriculture (or equivalent) • High level people management skills • Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements • Take responsibility for farm performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff management and leadership • Communicate with farm workers and source goods & services external to the business • Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting • High level of responsibility and decision making • Negotiation skills & conflict management • Troubleshooting skills • Liaise and gather ideas outside the farm 	<p>Around \$60,000 to \$75,000</p>	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community • Dairy Australia Developing Dairy Leaders Program – Tier 1 • Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers • Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	<p>For Farm Production Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Agriculture • Cert IV in Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers licence • Transport • Asset building to continue • Keep building stock and herd improvement 	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm Business Manager • Share Farmer • Farm Owner <p>When Will I Be Ready?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 2 years experience for Business Manager role • Resources and up to 5 years experience for Share Farmer or ownership role • Completed Diploma of Agriculture

Scott Hurrell Farm Business Manager, Comboyne

Scott Hurrell grew up on a family dairy at Comboyne in the mid-north coast and now manages the farm alongside his older brother, Ben (on the cover).

“Mum and Dad are retiring so my brother and I are leasing the farm, buying the herd and running our own business. For the last 18 months, we’ve been managing most aspects of the farm,” Scott said.

Scott studied finance at University and worked in Sydney and London for 8 years. He decided to return to Comboyne 2 years ago to work on the family farm.

“I’ve always loved farming and wanted to be a farmer,” he said. “What I’m doing now is what I’ve dreamed of doing – I always knew I’d come back to the farm.”

The farm operates as a family farming unit; Scott is Farm Business Manager and co-manages the operation alongside Ben, who completed a 2 year dairy apprenticeship and has worked on the farm since. Scott learns from Ben and their Dad still helps with making farm decisions.

Together, Scott and Ben oversee the whole farm operation, which milks 730 cows on 250 hectares, with a further 250 hectares used for replacement heifers and silage. They also oversee 7 employees, engage a farm business consultant and a nutritionist.

To be a successful Farm Business Manager, Scott believes a person must have problem solving skills; “You require the ability to analyse aspects of the business that require improvement and implement changes so the business transitions smoothly,” he said. “An important part of the role is identifying issues before they occur; but you also need to investigate a possible resolution to implement, and if it’s a major decision that needs to be made, you have to come up with a set of recommendations.”

“You need to act and take the initiative to implement a decision based on the information you have – essentially, farm management is a role with an increased level of decision making.”

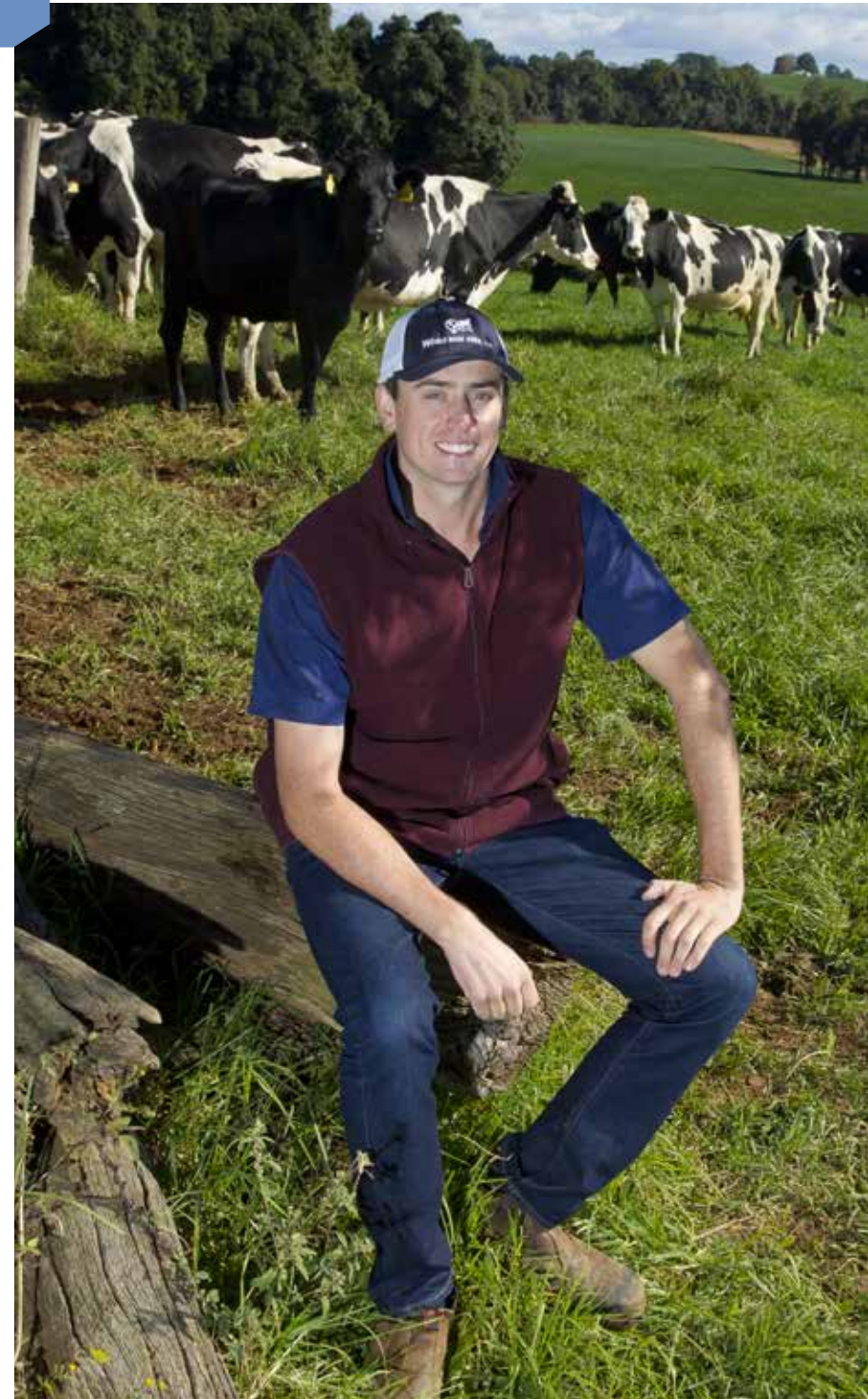
As part of his role, Scott is responsible for the business’ budgets while Ben’s partner, Belinda, manages the operation’s business administration. “I am responsible for budgets and we have a simple way of tracking our day to day cash flow. I handle projections and make sure it reconciles with what’s happening on the farm.”

“Belinda handles all of our administration; she does the wages, accounts, manages the accounting software, as well as other tasks that need investigating or organising. She carries a lot of the weight in ensuring that it all gets done.”

Scott appreciates there are challenges in his role. Monitoring herd health is important and he has to adapt to rapidly changing seasonal conditions. With his parents moving towards retirement, navigating business succession is also a challenging area. Scott believes building a strong model for succession that meets everyone’s goals is important. The Hurrell’s have engaged a farm business management consultant to set a structure for business succession.

Scott has now been Farm Business Manager for 18 months and he is looking forward to growing more in the role; “We’ve set up our own business so it’s just a matter of timing. Some of the details are still to be worked out at a higher level, but we have a plan in place,” Scott said.

“We want to develop the farm and make sure that we have the most profitable business model possible – and if opportunities come up down the track for other farms or diversification, that would be great.”



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"> Establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business Milk Harvesting — Train others in correct milk harvesting techniques Animal Husbandry — organise the mating program and AI livestock, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff Feed Management and Delivery — manage stored feed inventory, understand dietary requirements based on production, cost and availability, balance rations Pasture Production and Cropping — determine the paddocks to lock up for fodder conservation and the most appropriate time to harvest, organise for purchase, delivery and application of fertilisers Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance – maintain and develop stock handling equipment, shedding and feeding areas Administration — 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management Minimum of a Diploma of Agriculture (or equivalent) High level people management skills High level Business Management skills Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements Take responsibility for farm performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business Staff management and leadership Communicate with farm workers and source goods & services external to the business Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting High level of responsibility and decision making Negotiation skills & conflict management 	Around \$90,000 to \$120,000	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community Dairy Australia Developing Dairy Leaders Program – Tier 1 Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	<p>For Farm Production Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma of Agriculture Cert IV in Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drivers licence Transport Asset building and looking at other wealth creation opportunities (e.g. purchasing and leasing out a flat or house) 	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share Farmer Farm Owner <p>When Will I Be Ready?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and up to 5 years experience for Share Farmer or ownership role Completed Diploma of Agriculture

Tim and Kellie Walden Share Farmers, Muswellbrook

Tim and Kellie were attracted to dairy farming because of the lifestyle. “Tim’s family farmed various properties with sheep and beef cattle,” Kellie said. “I grew up in the country on acreage with 2 dairy farms on my road. Growing up around animals and in the country, dairy farming was a lifestyle that appealed to us.”

After school, Tim completed a Certificate IV of Agriculture and worked as a Dairy Farmhand at Kangaroo Valley, where he met Kellie. The couple moved to Jamberoo where Kellie worked at a horse stud and Tim worked as a Dairy Farm Assistant Manager, progressing to a Manager.

A farm management position at Simpson, Victoria arose. After getting a taste of dairy life, Kellie decided to co-manage the 400 cow dairy farm with Tim. While managing the farm, they saved money and purchased tools, equipment and young stock.

After a year, they felt ready to take the next step; “when we heard a farmer from Jamberoo was looking at retiring and leasing out his farm, we were very eager,” Tim said.

They sold their stock at a profit and returned to Jamberoo. After 2 years managing the farm and waiting for the lease to eventuate, the arrangement ceased due to a deceased estate. Tim and Kellie looked for other opportunities. They were contacted by a farmer at Muswellbrook planning to close his dairy and share farming was suggested as an option.

Tim and Kellie have been share farming on the Muswellbrook property for 6 months. With 80 hectares plus 25 hectares of leased land, they supply the tools, equipment and own the cows.

“When share farming, you are responsible for everything, including milking duties, feed requirements, calves and paperwork. We milk 150 cows twice a day; we have 41 calves with 20 still on milk once a day.

We have 30 dry cows that have to be fed hay and rotated a couple of times a week. We irrigate as well during the drier months” Kellie said.

Tim and Kellie enjoy share farming and like having the freedom of operating a farm. They appreciate it can be physically demanding and have also had to learn about the Hunter Valley climate. To help, they engage an agronomist who provides advice on grass and crops, when to sow, pesticides and herbicides, soil conditions and fertiliser; “as we were unfamiliar with the local climate and environment, this help has been critical to our business,” Tim said.

The Waldens believe resilience, passion, and a nurturing nature are key to share farming; “trying to make our path and not having a dairy background or a family farm is difficult, it takes a lot of dedication and hard work to keep pushing to get there,” Kellie said.

Outside of work, Kellie is completing a calf rearing course; “we believe it is an essential part of dairying to keep renewing your knowledge and to keep up with the many changes that occur in dairying,” she said.

In future, Tim and Kellie are looking forward to maintaining a profitable dairy and aim to hire some employees to ensure they have a good work/life balance.

The Walden’s tips:

- Save money so you can take advantage of opportunities
- Talk to lots of people and keep your ear open for people retiring or farms that could be started again
- Talk and listen to any successful farmer who will give you their time
- Look into investing into calves in preparation for when the time comes
- In a share farming/owner arrangement: communication is key, if both parties understand from the beginning what is expected and who is responsible for what, you will maintain a good relationship



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"> • Milk Harvesting — Train others in correct milk harvesting techniques • Animal Husbandry — organise the mating program and AI livestock, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff • Feed Management and Delivery — manage stored feed inventory, understand dietary requirements based on production, cost and availability, balance rations • Pasture Production and Cropping — determine the paddocks to lock up for fodder conservation and the most appropriate time to harvest, organise for purchase, delivery and application of fertilisers • Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance — maintain and develop stock handling equipment, shedding and feeding areas • Administration — 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management • Minimum of a Diploma of Agriculture (or equivalent) • High level people management skills • High level Business Management skills • Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements • Take responsibility for farm performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business • Staff management and leadership • Communicate with farm workers and source goods & services external to the business • Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting • High level of responsibility and decision making • Negotiation skills & conflict management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Farmers are regarded as 'Independent contractors'. They share the farm income 	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community • DA Developing Dairy Leaders Program – Tier 2 • Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers • Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	<p>For Share Farming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Agriculture 	<p>Share Farmer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% Share – All mobile farm machinery • 50% Share – All mobile farm machinery and all stock <p>Lessee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lease property and own all mobile farm machinery and all stock 	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessee • Farm Owner <p>When Will I Be Ready?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the resources and equity you have built up

Rob Cooper Farm Owner, Tamworth

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 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



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"> • Milk Harvesting — Train others in correct milk harvesting techniques • Animal Husbandry — organise the mating program and AI livestock, oversee the animal health program including the training and supervision of staff • Feed Management and Delivery — manage stored feed inventory, understand dietary requirements based on production, cost and availability, balance rations • Pasture Production and Cropping — determine the paddocks to lock up for fodder conservation and the most appropriate time to harvest, organise for purchase, delivery and application of fertilisers • Plant Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance — maintain and develop stock handling equipment, shedding and feeding areas • Administration — 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of dairy farm systems, including people management • Minimum of a Diploma of Agriculture (or equivalent) • High level people management skills • High level Business Management skills • Demonstrated ability to be able to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements • Take responsibility for farm performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to establish goals and strategic direction for the farm business • Staff management and leadership • Communicate with farm workers and source goods & services external to the business • Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting • High level of responsibility and decision making • Negotiation skills & conflict management 	<p>Depends on farm size and productivity</p>	<p>Every Dairy Region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community • DA Developing Dairy Leaders Program – Tier 2 • Young Dairy Networks – which run events for your young staff • Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	<p>For Share Farming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Agriculture • Registered Training Organisations (RTO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Farm • Milking Shed and all equipment needed to run the farm system • Livestock 	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase your involvement in Dairy Industry; e.g. RDP Board, Dairy Farmer organisation and other industry boards, Leadership programs.



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
<i>Quad bike</i>	<i>\$10,000</i>	<i>Next year</i>
<i>Tractor</i>	<i>\$80,000</i>	<i>2 years</i>
<i>Other farm equipment</i>	<i>\$100,000</i>	<i>5 years</i>
<i>Cows. e.g. 350 cows and young stock</i>	<i>\$450,000</i>	<i>10 years</i>

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
<i>Discuss my advancement with the Farm Owner</i>	<i>Next week</i>
<i>Enrol in Cert III Ag</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>
<i>Start saving</i>	<i>Now</i>

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

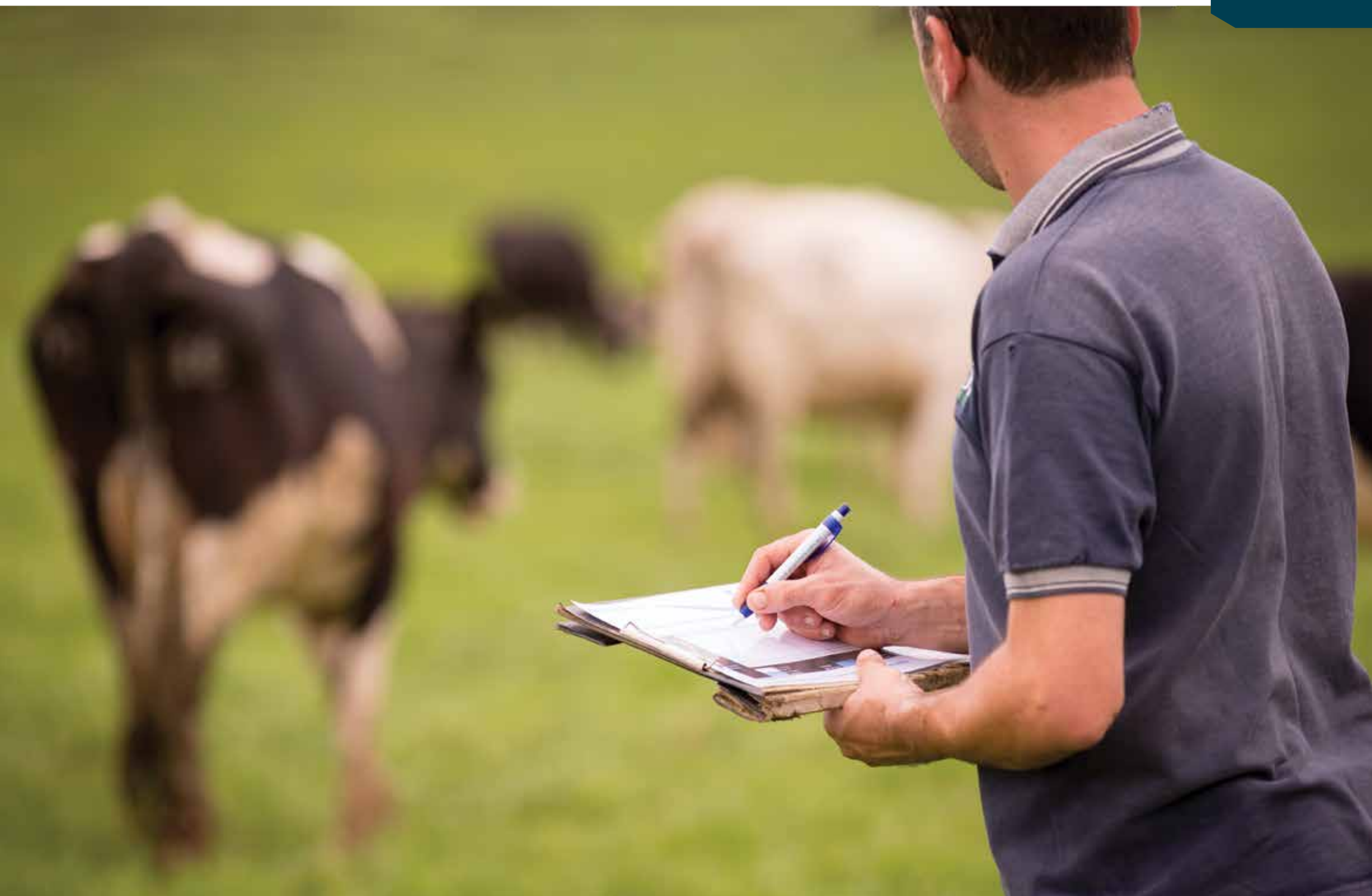
How many years will it take to get the AQF level you need?

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



Planning Your Dairy Career

You can download this document at: www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/stepping-stones/overview.htm

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?

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

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



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