



Penn State Cooperative Extension Capitol Region Dairy Team

LABOR MANAGEMENT

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Many dairy farm businesses have labor needs beyond those supplied by the owner/operator. This labor may be provided by family members, nonfamily employees, or a combination of the two.

Workers differ in their capabilities, work habits, attitudes, personality traits, ambitions, and willingness to accept responsibilities. For these reasons, labor management is a difficult and often neglected job.

However, workers — both family and nonfamily — want and respect a good boss. He can make their work easier, more productive, and more rewarding. A good boss creates a wholesome attitude, a desire to work, and a pleasant but businesslike relationship between himself and his employees.

The purpose of this article is to suggest ways of making hired labor a more profitable investment in your farm business.

- Hire capable, dependable help. The dairy farm business requires people with skill, intelligence, dependability, and willingness to work. To get reliable help, farmers must compete with other employers in the community. Usually, farmers pay lower cash wages than industry, but make up some of the difference by providing housing, farm-produced food, job security, and pleasant working conditions.

Usually, hiring the lowest cost help does not result in the lowest labor cost per unit produced. It is better to hire help in which you have confidence, and through good management make the worker productive and profitable.

- Tell and show workers what to do. Failure to properly instruct an employee is a frequent cause of misunderstanding and often wastes time and materials.

Don't assume that a worker knows how to do a job — be sure. Time spent explaining job assignments means more work accomplished, better quality work, and greater satisfaction for both worker and farm operator.

Recognize that each worker is different. Some are more skilled at certain jobs than others. Some understand and follow instructions better than others.

A good manager explains, and, if necessary, shows workers how jobs are to be done.

- Supervise the work. A good manager helps the worker develop good work habits and methods. He tells workers if the job is not being done satisfactorily, what is wrong with it, and how to correct the mistake. He should also praise workers for a job well done. A pat on the back will improve the worker's attitude and performance.



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Supervision must start when the work starts. Don't waste time by permitting a worker to continue to do unacceptable work. Careful supervision enables you to develop a competent work force.

- Schedule your farm work. Make weekly and daily work schedules. List the jobs to be done. Tell workers about your plans. If the schedule calls for overtime work, let them know ahead of time. If a worker must have time off, it should be worked into the schedule. Impress workers with the importance of getting critical jobs done on time.

Make a list of "odd jobs." It will help keep workers productive during periods when planned work is delayed or between job assignments.

Posting a work schedule and a list of odd jobs is a good idea. It forces you to plan ahead, and it gives workers an idea of what is expected of them.

- Have an understanding about working conditions. Have a clear understanding about working hours, including starting time, quitting time, time for meals, amount of and rate of pay for overtime, days off, and vacation time.

Be sure the wage rate, the pay-day, and any withholdings from the pay are understood at the time the worker is hired. Have a well-understood policy and enforce it, but make it flexible enough to fit individual situations.

- Set an example for your employees. Workers tend to adapt the habits of their boss. You can expect your employees to have good personal habits and work habits if you set a good example.

Workers resent having all the undesirable jobs to do. They may get careless and lazy if left to work alone for long periods of time. They need supervision, but also they want some responsibility and a word of praise for the success of the farm business.

- Create a feeling of pride in

Md., Pa. Youth Receive Honorable Mention At National Dairy Bowl

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Youth teams from Maryland and Pennsylvania tied for fifth place overall and gained honorable mention in the 4-H Invitational Dairy Bowl Competition conducted here Nov. 8 and 9 during the North American International Livestock Exposition.

Virginia had the top team, with teams from New York, Illinois, and Minnesota placing second through fourth.

Maryland quizzers were Christopher England, Frederick County; Amanda Greene, Howard County; Joseph Stowe, Cecil County; and Tracy Webb, Harford County. April Hall of the University of Maryland Cooperative extension was their coach.

The Pennsylvania team consisted of Lebanon Countians Brad Hoover, Daryl Maulfair, Jared Zimmerman, and Hannah Bomgardner.

Twenty-one teams from across the nation participated in the quiz bowl, which tested the 4-H'ers dairy knowledge in a format similar to the game-show "It's Academic".



Maryland dairy quiz bowl team members who tied for fifth at the National 4-H Dairy Bowl competition are, from left, Amanda Greene; Joseph Stowe; April Hall, coach; Tracy Webb, and Christopher England.

National Dairy Shrine Seeks Applicants

COLUMBUS, Ohio — National Dairy Shrine has simplified and shortened its application for the Progressive Dairy Producer (PDA) Award, according to Dr. Chris Woelfel, chairman of the PDA committee.

This revised and shortened application was developed to increase contest participation.

The award was started three years ago to recognize and reward outstanding young dairy producers (21-45 years old) who

have introduced and applied effective management and business practices to help achieve a more profitable dairy business. An anonymous selection committee will pick three winners in the following herd size categories: small herd, 150 milking cows or less; mid-size herds, 151-500 milking cows; or large herd, 501 milking cows or more.

The winner in each size category will receive an educational travel award to use out of state in

the value of \$2,000 (\$1,500 at time of the trip and \$500 when the evaluation form is submitted after the trip).

For additional information and/or application, visit the Website, www.dairyshrine.org. It will be necessary for you to use Acrobat Reader to download an application. If this isn't possible for you, contact National Dairy Shrine at (614) 878-5333 or e-mail shrine@cobaselect.com. Deadline for applicants is March 15.

LOL Commends PMMB's Pooling Regulation

CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.) — After four years of advocating support for a more fairly distributed Pennsylvania over-order premium system, Land O'Lakes, Inc., commends the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board for issuing a new pooling regulation. If approved, the regulation released Nov. 18 would pool 45 percent of the over-order premium dollars collected on all Class I milk produced, processed and sold in the state among all Pennsylvania dairy producers.

"When the over-order premium was established in 1988, it was intended to alleviate some of the economic burden that producers face in times of low milk prices, adverse weather conditions and poor market conditions," said Dennis Schad, Land O'Lakes director of Mid-Atlantic

marketing and regulatory affairs. The board never intended the premium to benefit only a small group of producers, those shipping to Class I markets in Pennsylvania.

Land O'Lakes and other organizations representing dairy producers in the state called for the PMMB to issue a pooling regulation so more farmers in the state would benefit from the premium dollars. The initial regulation was drafted in the spring of 2001. After 18 months of Land O'Lakes members writing, calling and visiting with PMMB board members and state legislators in support of pooling, the final regulation's release is a victory for the farmer-owned cooperative.

"Land O'Lakes supports this new pooling regulation, even though it pools the premium at a

lower percentage than we requested, because our members need those pooled premium dollars now more than ever," said Schad, adding that Land O'Lakes represents more than 2,000 dairy producers in Pennsylvania. "With the current drought situation and low milk prices, this regulation will enable the over-order premium to do what it was originally intended to do — ease the financial burden that all Pennsylvania producers face."

The final regulation has been sent to the state House and Senate Ag Committees. The committees will have 20 days in session to approve the regulation. Then it will be sent to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission and, finally, to the Attorney General's office for approval. Implementation is expected sometime between March and May 2003.

the work. Good quality livestock and well-kept buildings and grounds give workers a sense of pride and personal satisfaction.

Workers want modern machinery that is in good working order. Old, worn equipment means harder work and longer hours. Labor-saving equipment enables the owner to increase labor productivity and attract competent help.

Pay adequate wages. Low wages are frequently given as the reason a worker changes jobs. But behind many wage disputes is dissatisfaction with other things.

- Provide satisfactory housing. When housing is furnished it should enable the worker's family to live comfortably and with dignity. Frequent complaints by the spouse and family of the employee about unsatisfactory living conditions destroy morale and job satisfaction, causing the employee to seek more desirable living and working conditions. It should be understood at the time of employment that the worker is responsible for keeping the home and grounds clean and respectable.

- Be a good boss. In summary, here are some characteristics of a

good boss. Check yourself — what kind of a boss are you?

1. Make the work rules clear and positive. Be sure workers understand them. Enforce the rules fairly on all workers, family members included.

2. Teach workers — tell, show, supervise, reward.

3. Be firm, fair, and consistent in dealing with all employees.

4. Praise a job well done.

5. Reprimand if work is not up to standard. Make criticisms constructively.

6. Set an example for your workers, and apply the Golden Rule in managing people.