

Managing Relief Staff

It can be difficult to find and retain good relief staff. By attending to the compliance aspects you can keep your business safe and by looking after H & S, training, and doing some preparation you can keep people safe and engaged.

Employee or contractor?

It is important to be clear as to whether or not relief staff are contractors or employees.

Contractors typically invoice a farmer for work carried out. On its own however this is not enough to classify them as a contractor. They must also fulfill the requirements set down by the Department of Labour which include but are not limited to:

- They pay their own tax and ACC levies.
- If earning over \$60,000 they are GST registered.
- A contractor generally sets their own fee for a job.
- A contractor has control over whether or not they accept a job.

If you incorrectly classify an employee as a contractor you will be liable to give the 'employee' their employment entitlements. The 'employer' may also be penalised.

Contracts - using the right one at the right time

There are three main contracts used for relief staff:

- **Casual** – the employee is not offered any set hours and there is no pattern to the employment.
- **Permanent part-time** – there is a regular pattern of work, e.g. every third weekend, and no end date.
- **Fixed term** – an employee can be offered a fixed term position for a specific task e.g. feeding calves or a project with a specific end date.

It is important that no matter which agreement you use that the terms and conditions are made very clear. You cannot use a fixed term agreement as a trial period and if you sign someone up as a casual you cannot include a 90 day trial.

For full descriptions of employment types and entitlements go to: www.employment.govt.nz/start-ing-employment

Health & safety

Keeping staff safe extends to your relief staff be they employees or contractors.

You will need to ensure that relief staff are inducted onto your farm.

You should be comfortable that relief staff are able to use any machinery or vehicles that are a requirement for the job.

A hazard map showing any no-go areas on the farm is a useful tool.

Provide any safety gear required.

For H & S help and suggestions go to:

- www.dairynz.co.nz/people/health-and-safety
- www.dairynz.co.nz/people/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-app-review

Put processes in place so you can leave the farm in confidence

Do your homework just as you would do with a permanent employee. Check references and ensure that relief staff have the necessary skills to undertake the job.

Have clear expectations around the role and responsibilities and communicate these.

By ensuring that you have a simple easy-to-use process in place for relief staff to follow will help to minimise the risk of mistakes happening.

Provide emergency contact phone numbers. Not just your own - what if something goes wrong on the farm while you are away and you can't be contacted.

Create Standard Operating Procedures for routine tasks such as clean up, setting up the shed, mastitis protocol, preferably include pictures as well as words to make it even easier to follow.

Remember that every dairy will be slightly different so make sure that you include these in your instructions, don't assume that relief staff will 'just do it'.



www.dairynz.co.nz/people/employer/staff-management/policies-and-procedures

Keeping relief staff coming back

Paying a fair rate for the job done and paying promptly are a good incentive for relief workers to return.

A clean, well - organised dairy, and having systems in place if there are any problems will also make relief staff more comfortable about working on your farm.

Keep the system as simple as possible.