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AHEAD**
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Get a future
in agriculture

Your guide to
a career in

FARMING

Your New Career

Starts Here

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Making it big

The agriculture industry is big – the biggest industry in New Zealand. It employs thousands of people in a whole range of jobs, from farm workers to scientists to accountants.

Some of the most important people in the agriculture industry started their working lives on a farm. Often, when you talk to them, they'll tell you that's the job they enjoyed the most.

And it's the one that set them up for life whether that's in the sheep, beef, dairy or arable farming sectors.

Working on a farm involves more than just milking cows, shearing sheep, herding cattle or driving around on tractors. Today, the average New Zealand farm is a multi-million dollar business.

It uses high-end technology, and leads the world in many areas. New Zealand farmers run big businesses and provide products for countries around the globe.

At the same time, they enjoy a great lifestyle – one which leaves time for family and friends and, in time, let's many people become their own boss, with their own profitable business.

This guide has been put together to help people like you, who are thinking about working on a farm, but aren't sure what's involved or where to begin.

A large, stylized green cloud graphic is located in the bottom right area of the page. It has a soft, puffy appearance with a few smaller, similar cloud shapes floating above it. Inside the main cloud, the text 'So come on, let's get cracking!' is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

So come on, let's get cracking!



It's easy to start...

Anyone can start from the bottom and work their way to the top. There are plenty of jobs – just check out some of the options below.

Farm assistant

Perfect for someone with no farming experience. You'll learn the basics of farming while getting paid for it!

Jessica, farm assistant: *"I love being outside and I just love animals too. My main aim is to become a farm owner. I'm just working my way up at the moment."*

Herd or stock manager

Herd manager = dairy
Stock manager = sheep and beef

This is the next step up from farm assistant and usually requires 2-3 years on-farm experience, plus some training. By then you'll have a good understanding of basic farm skills and you'll be ready to take on the responsibility of looking after valuable stock. You'll also find the pay increases quickly as you move up the scale – much more quickly than other jobs.

Lucy, herd manager: *"What I enjoy about my current situation is the independence I have and the ability to make decisions."*

Bert, stock manager: *"My morning is taken up by stock movement, transferring cattle or sheep from paddocks or*

hill blocks. In the afternoon we do maintenance: fencing or development work - weather permitting."

Farm manager

In this job you'll be in charge of the farm, the stock and in many cases staff as well. You'll know exactly what needs to be done (and when). The day-to-day running of the farm will be your responsibility. Motivated people are becoming farm managers inside five years of starting out – that certainly beats 20 years climbing the corporate ladder!!

Cole, farm manager: *"My role as farm manager is to look after the farm day-to-day and delegate work to staff. I also milk twice a day. That's along with any maintenance and other jobs on-farm."*

Variable order sharemilker and contract milker

This gives a chance for those in the dairy industry to be their own boss. You'll manage the owner's cows and the farm and get paid on the basis of the amount of milk you produce. The better job you do, the more milk the cows will produce and the more money you'll earn.

Share-farming

Although its less common in the sheep and beef sector, opportunities do exist. Like the dairy industry, the land owner provides the land and the share-farmer provides stock and equipment.

50/50 sharemilker

As well as being your own boss, you will own your own herd of cows and farming equipment, but you'll use someone else's farm. Usually it's a 50/50 arrangement, with the sharemilker and the land-owner splitting the costs and the profits. This position allows you to build your savings, possibly to buy a farm, or to achieve any other goal you have.

James and Melissa, 50/50 sharemilkers:
"Share-milking provides excellent opportunities to increase our equity and progress towards our ultimate goal of farm ownership. Being on-farm also creates a positive farming environment for the upbringing of our future family."

Other options

Once you have some farming experience, you might choose to move into another area. For example, you might set up a contracting business, or work in a rural store, or go on to train other people.

Talk to successful farmers. They'll tell you that the skills they learned on-farm at the beginning of their career helped set them up for life.

At the back of this book are contacts for people you might want to talk to, or websites to look at.

Qualifications

The agriculture industry is continually evolving. It is already a very high-tech business - we're moving away from a mud and gumboots mentality and the industry needs smart, forward-thinking people on-farm to address future challenges.

While still at school it pays to study your sciences and maths as a basis for understanding animal systems.

There are many different institutions where students can study towards agriculture-specific degrees, national certificates and diplomas to prepare for a future in agriculture.

Starting out

If you are looking to start out as a farm assistant then a National Certificate in Agriculture (Level 2/3), from AgITO, is a good place to begin. You can build on formal qualifications just as you do with skills on-farm.

Climbing the career ladder

You may want to look at other qualifications as you prepare to move into a management position or if you are already there. These include: National Certificate in Agriculture (Production Management) or a National Diploma in Agri-business Management from AgITO.

Some farmers also have a Bachelors degree in an agricultural related field which they have gained from either Massey University or Lincoln University.

**For more information on
agriculture qualifications
go to getahead.co.nz.**

Sound good so far?

For information on the Get Ahead experience days go to getahead.co.nz.

Farming is not for everyone. But for the right person it's a great job with plenty of opportunities. All sorts of people build great careers in farming and become really successful. Whether you've just left school or have a few years experience – there'll be a job that suits.

With the right attitude, you might become a herd or stock manager within a few years; a farm manager in five or six years... or even run your own business as a sharemilker or in another kind of arrangement.

Help yourself out a bit...

The list below might help you sort out what you want in a job. We've put some things in... but you'll want to add more.

<i>"What I Want"</i>	<i>Not Really</i>	<i>Prefer It</i>	<i>Absolutely!</i>
I want to work outdoors			
I want to work with other people			
I want to work with animals			
I want a job that keeps me fit			
I want to work with machinery			
I want to challenge myself			
I want to learn new skills			
I want to get promotions			
I want to be my own boss			
I want to be in control of my life			
I want to earn good money			
Add your own:			

If you have lots of ticks in the 'prefer it' and 'absolutely' columns then working on a farm might be just what you're looking for.



Step up

What is a boss looking for?

Most bosses want two things: the right attitude and good skills.

Most important is the right attitude, which means:

- Being honest and reliable. For example, you've got to turn up for work on time, all the time
- Being able to work on your own. Employers don't want to have to check on you
- Being enthusiastic and interested in what's going on
- Taking pride in your work and your workplace
- Being willing to learn.

Often a boss will employ a person with a good attitude, because you can't teach that, but you can teach someone the skills required to work on a farm.

Different employers look for different skills – but they don't have to be related to farming and you don't have to have a certificate attached. You might be really good with machinery, or already have an HT licence – those things can make a big difference.

Giving it your best shot

Before you start applying for jobs, think about how you want to present yourself to a potential boss. Here are a few ideas to get you through the application and interview process.

Writing a covering letter

A covering letter is the first thing a boss will read. If it's not done well, you might not get a second chance.

A covering letter should be short (one page max) and include:

- Your contact details
- The job you are applying for
- Why you want the job (where you see yourself going)
- Why they should hire you (compared to someone else).

Make sure you find out the person's name that you're writing to. Don't just send it to 'The farm manager'. If their name is Frank Smith, write to "Mr Smith". It shows you've made an effort – and you'll stand out from people who don't.

Be honest about what you're good at – and where you might need a hand. A good boss won't mind helping you out if you've got the right attitude and if you've got other skills they need.

Check these websites – they've got some good ideas on how to write letters:

www.yourcareerguide.co.nz

www.kiwirecareers.govt.nz

www.seek.co.nz

Finally, get someone you know and trust to check it for you. They might pick up things like spelling mistakes and have some ideas on how to make it sound better.

Writing a CV

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a summary of what you've done, and what skills you've got. You should give examples of your work experience that show you have skills that might be useful in the new job.

A CV gives a potential boss a good idea of whether or not you're suited for the job.

It's important that your CV is honest – don't be tempted to say you can do things, or have done things, when you haven't. A good boss will easily find out.

At the interview the boss will ask you questions about your CV. If your answers don't match what you claimed, you'll miss out. It's much easier if you stick to the facts.

A CV should:

- Be a true record of your skills and experience
- Summarise your relevant achievements - don't include every award you have ever received. But if you were in the First XV at school, say it.
- Be easy to read and clear
- Be 2-3 pages – max.

Here's a good format to follow in preparing a CV. Most computers have a selection of templates that can be used to prepare a CV or you can follow this format:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CONTACT DETAILS: Phone, Mobile, Email.
Include when is the best time to call.

CAREER GOALS: An outline of what you are looking for in a position.
This should be specific to the job you are applying for.

PREVIOUS POSITIONS: Include all previous jobs; include work experience or volunteer work if you have not had many jobs.
Include: position held, details of position, employer's name and period employed.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Include all education and training information.

INTERESTS: What you like to do in your spare time e.g. stamp collecting!

SKILLS: List your relevant skills.

REFERENCES: Include two or three work references if you can. If you have no previous employers you could use tutors, mentors, sports coaches or work experience referees. Make sure the people listed know you have given their details as a referee; they must be happy to act as a referee for you.

REMEMBER: Supplying referees' details on a CV gives the prospective employer the right to contact these people to discuss you.

What to write

The following table might help you identify your skills to put on your CV

<i>Skill stocktake</i>	<i>Write down all the things you can do or know in each of these areas:</i>
Animal health	
Livestock handling	
Pasture management and feeding	
Using and maintaining machinery	
Milking	
Working with others	
Working on your own	
Attitude	
Unit standards completed	
Other training completed	
Other skills	



Start looking

To make your career decision easier, try spending time in a job you think you might like.

If you have just finished school or are considering an agriculture career, summer is a good time to start. It gives you the opportunity to get some farm experience before the busy winter and spring periods – that will give you a head start on those who don't have any.

Employers will often start looking for new staff from February or March in time for the new dairy season starting on 1 June. Sheep and beef employers are often looking for staff in spring to help with the new lambing season.

You can find a job by:

- Talking to farmers you know, or in the neighbourhood. They'll know who is looking for staff
- Replying to an ad in the newspaper

- Looking on websites (Fencepost jobs at fonterra.com, www.trademe.co.nz, www.seek.co.nz)
- Using a specialist recruitment firm (check the web or Yellow Pages).

Get a mentor

A mentor is someone you respect who can be a sounding board for ideas and give advice and guidance in your job seeking.

In2 the Field

Get Ahead's In2 the Field mentor programme will allow you to sample that job you are keen on. Go to www.getahead.co.nz for more information and go to the Get Involved page.

Helpful tips

Preparing for interviews

Prepare yourself for an interview by putting together some questions to ask while you're there. Write them down and take them with you – otherwise it's too easy to forget them. Employers will be impressed to think you've done some homework. This could include questions like:


- What sort of skills are you looking for most?
- How will you judge if I have done a good job?

You should also ask about:

- Who else works on the farm, and what they do
- What your role will be
- When you're expected to work, and what your responsibilities are
- The level of ongoing contact you'll have with the boss
- The accommodation arrangements
- The amount of time off and what you'll be paid
- The hours of work throughout the season
- Any opportunities for training – both on the job and off farm
- The social life in the community
- Are there any past employees I can talk to about working for the boss?

What to do in the interview

This is your chance to sell yourself and get a good feel for whether this is the job for you.



It's important to be prepared. Here are a few ideas...

Before you go:

- Know where you are going and how long it will take you to get there
- Make sure you know what time you're expected and get there on time
- Select the right clothes to project the image you want
- Make sure your car is clean and tidy
- Have your questions for the employer written down and ready
- Have a checklist of what you want to cover in the interview so you come away knowing all you need to
- You may go on a farm walk and have a look around – so take suitable footwear and dress appropriately.

At the interview:

- Arrive on time
- Make a good impression
- Ask good questions – it shows you're interested
- Be honest!!
- Ask the employer the questions you have prepared
- Ask to see a description of the job you will be doing
- Don't leave until you're clear about what the job is
- See how well you'll fit in with the boss and other any other staff
- Remember, if you go out on the farm the employer will still be assessing you for the role
- Don't accept a job immediately. Take the employment agreement and job description away, get some advice and think about it.

Remember that during an interview everyone is trying to impress, including the boss. Ask him or her if there is someone you can ring to find out a bit more about them and the job.

It pays to talk to more than one person in case you talk to someone who just doesn't get on with your potential boss.

Detailed info on how to conduct yourself during an interview can be found on:

www.kiwicareers.govt.nz
www.seek.co.nz

The Employment Relations Act (2000) states you must receive a copy of the Employment Agreement (including job description) prior to starting the job. You should be given enough time to seek advice about the content of this agreement prior to signing it. Ask your mentor, an experienced friend or family member, or if you have significant concerns, a solicitor, or Federated Farmers (members only) to assist. Remember you don't have to accept the job straight away.



How to handle a job offer

This is where all your work and preparation pays off. You may have several offers at the same time. You may want to work for some of these people in the future, even if it's not the right job for you now, so it pays to be professional.

How do you decide?

Remember, the job with the most money may not be the best one! Do your homework, and ask yourself:

- Does the job match the things you put on your 'what I want checklist'?
- Do you have enough information about the job?
- Is there an employment agreement and job description? (these are legal requirements!)
- Have you had a chance to look over the agreement and get advice?
- Will you get training?
- What are the other staff like and could you fit in?
- What's happened to other people who have worked for this employer?
- What sort of reputation does he or she have?

It is important to make sure the job is what it seems to be and to check out your future employer.

It's the right job – what next?

If you think you want the job you will need to talk about the terms of the offer with your potential boss. You might want to negotiate parts of the agreement such as training, time off and pay. The agreement can only be signed when both parties agree. Two copies need to be signed — you keep one and your boss keeps the other.

Remember:

You should sign the Employment Agreement prior to starting work. Do not start the job until agreement is reached.

Declining a job

Not all positions will be right for you. Don't be discouraged. If you decide not to accept the offer, let the employer know quickly and politely.

Dealing with being turned down

If you don't get a job you apply for – don't worry. At some stage, it happens to everyone.

If you miss out, ask them why, and what you could have done better or differently. It can help you when applying for other jobs.

Some employers may not want to tell you – that's their choice. But always ask.

Starting out in a new job

You'll have a lot to learn about the farm and the people you're going to work with. Different farmers do things differently and may prefer you to do it their way, rather than the way you've done it before (if you have done it before!)

You'll gradually be shown how things work. This is when you should ask questions about anything you're not sure of or don't understand. Most employers prefer you to ask questions, rather than just have you 'give it a go' and get it wrong.

Tick off the starting-out checklist on the next page. It has important points that you should discuss with your employers when you start out. Never be afraid to ask questions, at any time.

Settling in

Your first job in the agriculture industry may be away from family and friends and a bit daunting. You'll be pleased to find there are lots of opportunities to meet people who have similar interests to you. Try joining a training programme or the local Young Farmers Club to meet new people.



Employer screening

The below will help you select your employer

Employer details

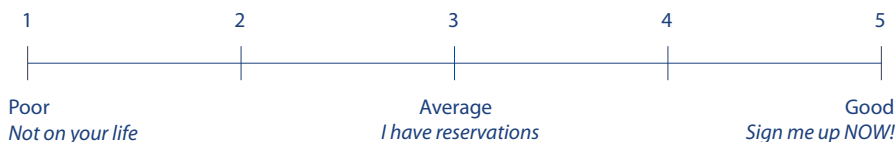
Employer name	
Position title	
Contact phone number	
Location	
Farm area	
Cow numbers	
Referee 1: (name & phone no)	
Referee 2: (name & phone no)	

Selection criteria

Agreement available	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No										
Job description available	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No										
Health & safety policies available	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No										
Employer personality (rate 1 to 5)	<table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5					
1	2	3	4	5							
Team (rate 1 to 5)	<table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5					
1	2	3	4	5							
Accommodation (rate 1 to 5)	<table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5					
1	2	3	4	5							
Training opportunities (rate 1 to 5)	<table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5					
1	2	3	4	5							
Distance to town (km)											
Hours of work											
Salary (\$)											

Overall impression

Rating scale



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Don't stop here!

Find out more at:

Get Ahead

The agriculture industry can take you anywhere – from developing a new vaccine for animals, to owning your own farm! It's an industry with huge potential and it's yours for the taking. Find out how.

 www.getahead.co.nz

DairyNZ


Find out what is happening in the dairy industry.

 0800 4 DAIRYNZ

 www.dairynz.co.nz

Beef + Lamb New Zealand

Find out the latest in the sheep and beef industry.

 0800 233 352

 www.beeflambnz.com

AgITO – Industry Training Organisation

If you're interested in careers and training, AgITO offers several options.

 0800 691 111

 www.agito.ac.nz

Federated Farmers of New Zealand

Federated Farmers has a jobs notice board and up-to-date information on what is happening in the different agriculture sectors.

 www.fedfarm.org.nz

Fencepost jobs

Website for dairy farm jobs throughout New Zealand. Also has other dairy related information and news. To access this site go to:

 www.fonterra.com

New Zealand Young Farmers

There is information here about joining the organisation and who the key contacts are in your area.

 0800 699 346 (NZYF INFO)

 www.youngfarmers.co.nz

