



STEPPING STONES

ON-FARM CAREER PATHWAYS IN
THE AUSTRALIAN DAIRY INDUSTRY

Stepping Stones

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, 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.

Stepping Stones can be downloaded from: thepeopleindairy.org.au/steppingstones

Why dairy?

Dairy is important

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

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

5,055 dairy farms in Australia produce 8.8 billion litres of milk.*

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 well-being of their animals, land and communities, and are involved in all phases of the dairy industry whether it is on farm, or off.

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

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

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

You can get qualified

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

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

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

* Australian Dairy Industry In Focus 2020 Dairy Australia

Planning your pathway

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

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

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

Step one: Where are you now?

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

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

Step two: Where do you want to go?

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

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

- Think about the type of work you really want to do, and why
- Consider the long term, not just your short term needs

- Consider fields of work that match who you are, your interests, and your current skill-set
- Are you looking for career advancement?
- Do you have, or need specialist skills or training to reach your goals?

Step three: Plan your journey

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

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

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

Step four: Ask for advice

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

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

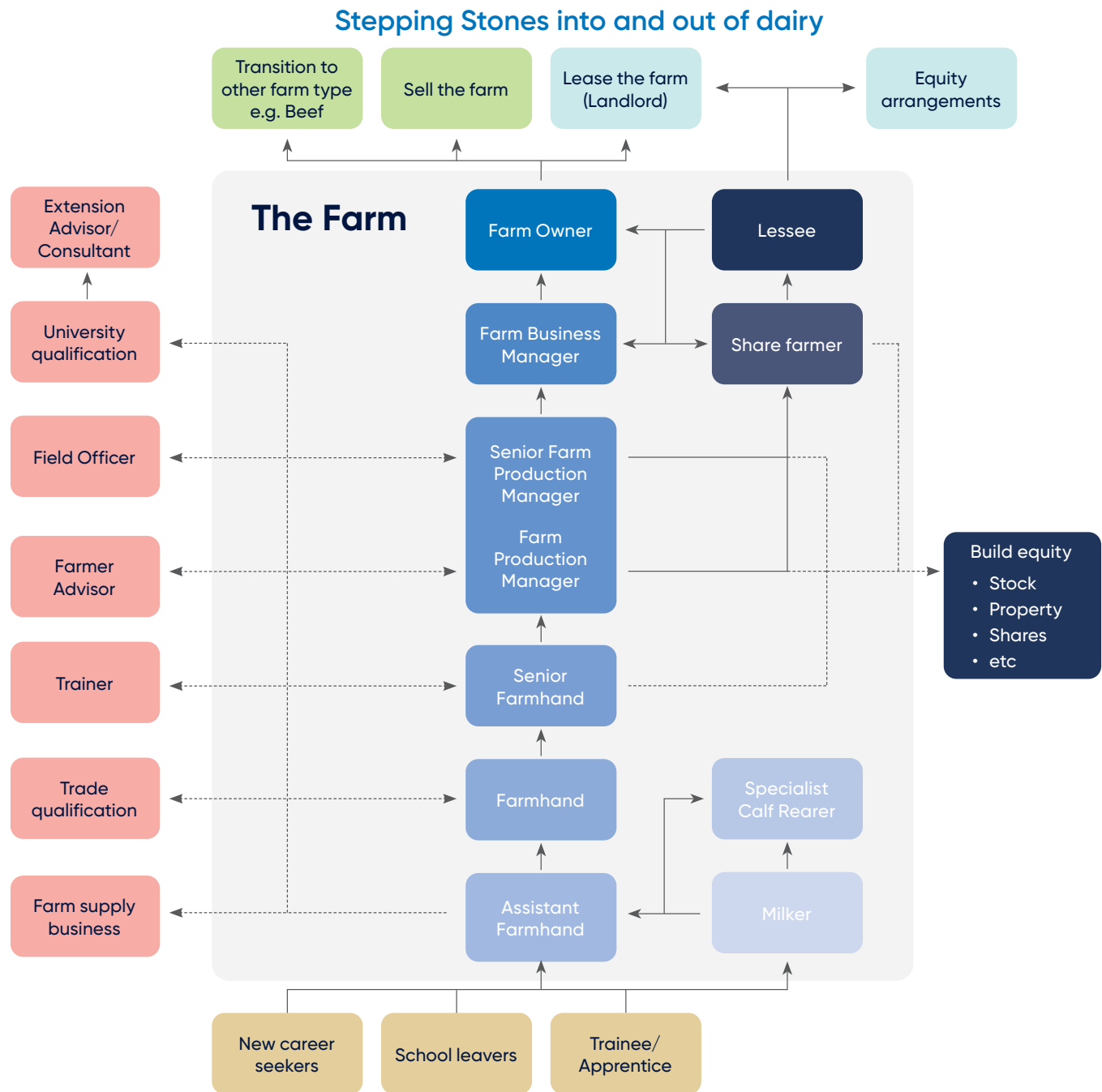
- Talk to people in the industry for advice on how to reach your career goals*
- If you're at school, talk to career advisors and teachers
- Contact training organisations, read course guides and learn about industry programs
- Get involved in Dairy Australia
- Learn about dairy industry scholarships

Contacts for further information

Dairy Australia
T 03 9694 3777
dairyaustralia.com.au
thepeopleindairy.org.au

Dairy pathways

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





Natasha Jennings

Relief Milker, Toolamba, Victoria

Natasha Jennings grew up on a small beef farm next door to a dairy. From Toolamba, in Victoria's Goulburn Valley region, Natasha has been dairy farming for over a decade.

'I'm proud of the work that I do. It is an evolving industry – it takes hard work, a certain intellect and a passion for what you do.'

Natasha loved visiting her neighbour's dairy. She enjoyed helping with calf feeding which led to being offered a job as a Relief Milker, 'I continued to milk most weekends during high school, on and off through university, in between traveling overseas and up until now' she said.

Natasha works at Waranga Downs, a 900 acre farm that milks 315 cows alongside four Relief Milkers and a Farmhand. She is responsible for part time calf feeding and relief milking and works outside of these roles, as needed.

'When milking, my responsibility is to set up the dairy. Normally another Milker brings in the herd from the paddock and as they arrive, I start up the dairy and begin milking' she said.

As part of her role, Natasha also helps with calf raising. She arrives early to feed the calves; a new calf requires colostrum and often needs assistance drinking from a bottle. The calf will then be guided to drink from a bucket and then graduate from the calf shed to a small paddock to drink from a trough.

Natasha believes the qualities required to perform her job are patience, a calm nature and keen observation. She also appreciates that the role has some challenges, such as maintaining calf health.

'One of the most important things is to be patient. If you remain calm, the energy will be reflected in the herd's behaviour towards you and the ease of handling the herd,' she said. 'Being observant and learning the signs of a sick or calving cow is also extremely important – the simplest things like the order the cows come into the dairy can be highly useful in helping detect cows starting to get sick or cows that are on heat.'

Natasha loves her job; she is always learning and feels a sense of achievement when the calves grow into healthy and strong cows. She also appreciates the role's flexibility, as it allows her to work part time while being a full time mum.

'I find the work rewarding and it's a lot more interesting than what people may think. When it involves getting a job done whilst watching the sunrise, it can even be therapeutic,' she said. 'Every milking offers new information about herd health and milk productivity, especially if you have an interest to ask questions.'

Natasha is unsure what path her career in the dairy industry will take, however she is keen to keep learning and growing in the dairy industry.

'What I have found to be valuable to enjoying my work is to always be open to new information and ideas, it not only keeps the job interesting – it also means you are always improving and evolving as an employee. I hope this trait also helps to keep me employable.'



Natasha's Tips:

- Never assume you know everything. Be open to new information and ideas.
- Don't be afraid of early mornings and hard work, it's extremely rewarding.
- It's important to always do your best and don't take short cuts.
- There is always something to do when working on a farm, so keeping busy is easy!

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 payrate is \$19.84 per hour (from first pay period starting 1 July 2021 – as at time of printing, noting these 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"> • 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 thepeopleindairy.org.au/employment-rewards/pay-rates-2020

Sarah Redgrove

Calf Rearer, Hunter Valley, New South Wales

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

'My parents own a dairy farm so I grew up helping out,' Sarah said. 'Instead of doing year 11 and 12 at school, I spent two 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 five years and we run it with Daniel's parents.'

The 485 hectare farm located just outside of Singleton, milks 400 cows and employs four 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 Well-being 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 payrate is \$19.84 per hour (from first pay period starting 1 July 2021 noting these 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 	<div> Roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist Farm Hand Farmhand </div> <div> 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 </div>

*Check the latest pay rates at thepeopleindairy.org.au/employment-rewards/pay-rates-2020

Linda Buckley Assistant Farmhand, Camden, New South Wales

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 two 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 two Jersey heifers at a sale, which they gradually grew to six 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 three 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 six 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 two 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 six 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 (eg. 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 	Roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist Calf Rearer • Senior Farmhand
							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

*Check the latest pay rates at thepeopleindairy.org.au/employment-rewards/pay-rates-2020

Greg Saddler Farmhand, Girgarre, Victoria

Greg Saddler has been a full time farmhand at Treeton Illawarras for four years.

Greg was introduced to agriculture at a young age through his parents who were dairy share farmers. When he was 10 years old, Greg's family moved to Meningie. 'In 2011, I started full time as a farmhand here at Treeton and realised I had a passion for the job,' Greg said.

Milking 400 cows on 320 hectares, Greg works alongside farm owners Geoff and Rosemarie Williams, their son Heath and two other employees. As a farmhand, Greg completes a wide variety tasks ranging from servicing machinery, welding, feeding and dehorning calves, tractor work, fencing, and general maintenance around the farm.

'My day varies by week, sometimes it will involve mixing the feed morning and night or I will do the afternoon milking along with heat detection and Artificial Insemination (AI) during mating,' Greg said. 'I am also in charge of the Quality Assurance program.'

In his role, Greg faces some challenges - he works mostly solo and is required to diagnose and treat sick cows which is a challenging, yet rewarding, part of his position.

'I enjoy the variety of tasks I do each day. I like tractor work, be that, stacking and feeding hay or paddock renovation. I also enjoy working with the cows and following their development from a calf to their transition into the dairy,' Greg said.

While working as a farmhand Greg, completed a Certificate III of Agriculture and participated in the Don Campbell Memorial Tour in 2012. The five day tour saw 14 young farmers from Victoria and SA visit a variety of dairy farms across Tasmania, 'it was a great experience to tour farms with other young people in the dairy industry,' Greg said.

Outside of work, Greg is involved in the local industry through the Lower Lakes Dairy Discussion Group which encourages local farmers to meet, share ideas and learn from each other. He is also passionate about playing local football.

'The hours I work vary a lot and involve working weekends. I'm lucky to work with people who allow me time off during football season. As some days can be long hours with early starts, I believe it is important to have some time for other interests.'

Greg aims to complete industry training such as Cups On Cups Off (COCO) and a front-end loader course to build upon his industry skills and farm safety awareness.

'I like living in Meningie, enjoy the work I do and have great people to work with and learn from,' Greg said. 'In five years, I imagine I will be at Treeton with an increase in skills and responsibilities.'



Greg's tips:

- Being a farmhand is a great job: find a farm where the owners are willing to spend time on your development - not only will you gain experience quickly, you will also enjoy your work more and may get the chance to progress to a more senior role.
- Attend discussion groups: they improve your knowledge, keep you up to date on changes in the industry and allow you to network with other local farmers.
- Be open to advice: to be a good farmhand, you need to listen and take advice from more experienced people. You have to enjoy what you do and want to learn to become better.
- Be adaptable: you have to think about different ways a task can be completed.

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 • thepeopleindairy.org.au/stepping-stones/calfcosts.htm 	Roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Farmhand
							When will I be ready?: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 2 years experience for Senior Farmhand • Completed Cert III in Agriculture

Gavin Grant Senior Farmhand, Wonthaggi, Victoria

Growing up in Glen Alvie, just outside of Wonthaggi, Gavin Grant aims one day to own his own dairy farm. Gavin's parents moved into dairy farming when he was six years old. His mum comes from a sheep farming background in New Zealand and his Dad grew up on a dairy farm in Gippsland.

As a teenager, Gavin attended school and would help out on his parent's dairy farm where he could, mainly doing paddock work and milking.

While a year ten student, Gavin completed a Certificate II in Agriculture. When he finished year eleven, Gavin went on to complete a Certificate III and IV. Gavin believes completing education helped him to increase his confidence on-farm and learn more about the industry. Through his study, Gavin also had the opportunity to make new connections; he met other people in the dairy industry who he could share information with and increase his learning.

While completing his studies, Gavin continued to build his on farm skills by working full-time on the family farm. At the age of twenty when he completed a Certificate IV in Agriculture, Gavin could take some of the farm workload from his parents.

Being a 100 per cent family run farm, Gavin was happy with the extra responsibilities. His role progressed into a senior farmhand position and he stepped-up his on-farm managerial duties. Over three years the farm grew from 140 cows to a 250 herd size.

Gavin likes that he does not have a set routine; everyday is different. His role includes milking, rearing and feeding the calves, paddock work and fertilising, and making sure there is plenty of grass.

Gavin especially enjoys the challenge of trying to run the family business as efficiently as possible. His role requires initiative and he is always trying to make the best decisions for the farm and the family business.

When vets, agronomists or service personnel visit the farm, Gavin always asks lots of questions. He believes the more questions he asks, the more he learns.

Gavin believes it is important to keep 'fresh' by having some time away from the farm. For three years he has been involved in a local discussion group, Wonburras.

Through the group Gavin, has continued to increase his knowledge by meeting other dairy farmers - he asks questions about how they operate their farm and he then takes the information back to trial on his family farm.

Gavin believes it is important to be involved in the local industry, to create opportunities to meet good farmers in the district and learn directly from them.

Since he was eighteen years old, Gavin has been slowly building his assets. Now twenty one, he owns 50 cows and some machinery. Gavin plans to continue to build his assets to progress to a 50 per cent share or small lease farm, with an aim have his own farm in future.



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 	<p>Around \$40,000 to \$50,000</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 leadership programs • 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

Kellie Price

Farm Production Manager, Yannathan, Victoria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kellie once again returned to full-time work on the Campbell's farm and she thrived in the role and responsibilities. Milking 460 cows on 180 hectares, she now works along side her brother Dean, and one part-time and two relief milkers.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Farm Production Manager							
The role	Prerequisites	Skills needed	Rewards	Regional support programs	Training options	Resources needed	Next career step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and services external to the business • Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting • High level of responsibility and decision making • Negotiation skills and conflict management • Troubleshooting skills • Liaise and gather ideas outside the farm 	Around \$60,000 to \$75,000	Every dairy region has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community • Dairy Australia leadership programs • Young Dairy Networks – which run events for young dairy farmers • Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	For Farm Production Manager: <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

Tavis Hall

Assistant Farm Manager, Wokulup, Western Australia

Tavis Hall is a fifth generation dairy farmer. He's Assistant Manager of a family dairy located at Wokulup. 'I have always helped my grandfather and parents on our family dairy farm - from driving tractors, helping dad in the dairy and milking cows,' Tavis said.

When he finished school, Tavis studied to be a diesel mechanic and worked in the industry for two years; 'I got sick of it - at the time my brother was studying at the local Agricultural College and the trainee at the College left and he jokingly said, 'why don't you take that job?' I started two weeks later and came out with a Certificate III in Agriculture,' he said.

After completing the 12 month traineeship, Tavis worked on different dairy farms in the region. Over two years he worked as a Farmhand doing milking, herd management and breeding, before returning to the family farm.

'My brother was working on the farm with my parents - there wasn't enough room for me as well, so I found a job with three different dairy farms. Then my brother decided to pursue dairy farming in another state, so I came home and took on his role,' he said.

Tavis has been back on the farm for three years. He initially worked as a Farmhand before gradually progressing to be Assistant Manager. As his skills increase, Tavis is given more responsibility - when his father is away he manages the 160 cow, 280 acre property.

'I'm learning what makes our farm run; whether it's tractors, cows, dairy, fencing or equipment. Then there's staff management and pastures - it's about learning every section and being able to take the pressure off my father having to run it all,' he said.

Tavis believes a person must have a love of animals, passion for farming, good time management skills and lots of patience to be a good manager.

In his role, Tavis ensures the farm is run smoothly and oversees three casual employees. He starts at 3am when he milks, feeds the cows and calves. From 8.30am to 1pm, he completes a variety of farm duties including stock movements. He oversees the afternoon milking and manages the calves, before retuning home at 6pm to his family.

'I don't take my job for granted - I work hard to make sure I am an asset to the farm and to the business,' he said. 'Although it can be challenging, it's also rewarding working with my family.'

Tavis has completed a First Aid course, Artificial Insemination (AI) course and has chemical certification. He enjoys showing cows and is a member of the Holstein

Breeder's Association. He is also involved in Western Dairy's Young Dairy Network (YDN) and farm discussion days, 'YDN has been key in helping me progress. As I work for my family, it's good to have other people supporting me and I give back to them as well,' he said.

In the short term, Tavis aims to expand the operation while he continues to learn. He wants to be fully equipped to run the business when his parents retire, and in the next few years he will learn the financial side of the business. Tavis is considering doing a farm management course and is enthusiastic about future farming technologies and robotics.



Travis' tips:

- If you want to get into dairy, visit a farm and learn how to milk - it's the basis of all dairy jobs and you can see if you like it
- Show people how passionate you are - it opens doors
- Keep your eyes open, read industry magazines and research: learn about cows, whether it's breeding, feeding or new technology
- Network and build a group of friends: I have a list of people - not just for helping out on the farm - but also if I've had a hard day we can catch up, talk and relax.

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 and services external to the business Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting High level of responsibility and decision making Negotiation skills and 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 leadership programs 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

Will Colbert Share Farmer, Ripplebrook, Victoria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Will participated in the 2013 New Zealand Dairy Study Tour with the UDV, which opened his mind to how different dairy farms operate. He has completed a Certificate IV in

Agriculture, is a member of GippsDairy's Young Dairy Development Program (YDDP) and Fonterra's discussion group.

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



Will's tips:

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

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

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

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

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

The farm owner then leased the dairy farm next door and Michael leased their 150 cows and purchased another 50 cows. The relationship to date was working well with the farm owner. There was constant discussion about the enterprise, how it was going and the future plan of the farm between all parties. After a two year period the farm owner then purchased this leased dairy farm.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When Kevin finished school, he completed a dairy apprenticeship and a Certificate IV in Dairy. Over 20 years Kevin has worked on several dairy farms, progressing from trainee, to farm management before becoming a lessee. Brodie got her first taste of dairy farming through high school work experience. Before becoming a lessee, she worked at a few cattle studs and the livestock team at Landmark, Wagga Wagga.

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

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

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

For over two years, Brodie and Kevin have been leasing the Bega property, milking 240 cows on 120 hectares. They work full time on-farm, managing a full time and a part time employee. As lessee, they are responsible for the daily operation of the whole farm business and work with a farm consultant who helps with the farm's production. They believe maintaining and improving the farming landscape, while managing their resources sustainably, is an important aspect of their role.

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

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

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

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



Brodie and Kevin's tips:

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

Share Farmer or Lessee

The role	Prerequisites	Skills needed	Rewards	Regional support programs	Training options	Resources needed	Next career step
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and services external to the business • Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting • High level of responsibility and decision making • Negotiation skills and conflict management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharefarmers 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 • Dairy Australia leadership programs • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Farmer: • 33% Share – All mobile farm machinery • 50% Share – All mobile farm machinery and all stock • Lessee: • 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

The Share Dairy Farming in Australia – Model Code of practice for share dairy farming with guidelines and tools for assessing share farming arrangements is available at thepeopleindairy.org.au/employment-rewards/share-dairy-farming

Information about leasing is available at thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future/leasing

Kym and Leanne Willsmore Farm Owner, Mount Gambier, South Australia

Kym and Leanne Willsmore have been dairy farming for thirty one years. The couple met as children at a party, attended the same high school and youth group, and married at nineteen years old.

Both were introduced to agriculture at a young age. Kym grew up on a market garden as well as a beef and sheep farm before his family moved into dairy farming, while Leanne came from a mixed family farm that had a dairy, sheep and a piggery.

In 1984, Kym started his dairy career working as a farmhand on his family's dairy farm at Inman Valley while Leanne worked as a dental nurse. They married in 1986 and after eight years of saving, became part of the family partnership through purchasing land and expanding the family farm.

Leanne and Kym admit that initially it was hard work building their level of ownership and assets, however it was also a highly rewarding experience. 'Sometimes it was just plain hard work. Other times, it was very satisfying knowing we were working towards more ownership and independence,' Kym said.

In 1994 after 10 years on the Inman Valley farm, the Willsmores moved to Macclesfield and became farm owners in partnership with Kym's parents, Kym's brother and his wife. After 13 years of managing the Macclesfield farm, Kym and Leanne left the family partnership to be sole owners of a dairy farm in Mount Gambier.

Kym and Leanne have been managing the Mount Gambier property for eight years, milking 330 cows on 124 hectares and leasing a further 28 hectares. As farm owners, they are responsible for overseeing the day to day operation of the farm business. 'Even though we don't physically do all the work, we're responsible for every aspect of the farm,' Kym said. 'We have to shoulder all the responsibility - the buck stops with us.'

On-farm, Kym works alongside two full time, three part time employees and accesses farm consultants such as a nutritionist and agronomist. Leanne manages the administration side of the business which includes accounting, employee wages and helps out on-farm when required.

Kym and Leanne believe in a work environment that cares for employees. 'We've become a lot more outward looking which means, it's not just about the farm it's more 'how can this farm support us as well as have a positive impact in our staff's lives?' We get enjoyment from giving people a go,' Kym said. 'It pays big dividends, not only from a productivity perspective, but also the workplace atmosphere.'

The family farm has also been home to Kym and Leanne's five children, aged 11–25 years old, three of which live on the farm. 'Our three eldest sons have all done a gap year - sometimes two or three years - at home on the farm after completing year 12, and have then gone off to follow their chosen profession,' Kym said. 'This has been a valuable experience to learn things like a good work ethic, teamwork, how to be consistent as well as building their farm skills.'

In the short-term, Kym and Leanne will remain owners of the Mount Gambier farm with an aim to have more consolidation. In future, they will look at possibly expanding or selling the business, depending on the situation.



The Willsmore's tips:

- Don't let the farm become your whole world: take time off even if you can't 'afford' it - spend time with your kids. Don't put the farm before your family, strive for a balance.
- To be a farm owner, you don't have to be great at one thing: you need to be good at everything!
- The farm owner sets the tone: a work environment that cares for people pays big dividends - both on productivity and in creating a positive place to work. We always have time for a chat with each other and whoever drops in.

Rob Cooper

Farm Owner, Tamworth, New South Wales

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

While studying, Rob worked weekends and holidays at a local dairy farm. When he finished, he was offered an assistant manager position on a large dairy back in Tasmania. After three 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 per cent grazing to working in Arizona milking 6,000 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 six months, he accepted a farm manager role on a 2,000 cow corporate dairy farm outside of Sydney. Rob managed the farm for three 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 per cent share and bought some machinery and cows. It was a small farm milking 130 cows, but I had the opportunity to the grow cow numbers and build equity – which is certainly an advantage of share farming.'

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

'I knew of someone who tried to buy the farm. The owners weren't interested in selling so we came up with other options and I joined as an equity partner. With an equity arrangement, all parties can invest and share in the capital improvements. Three brothers own the original farm – the four of us have started a new company. Over 10 years, we've expanded the operation from 1,400 to 3,230 hectares and have taken cow numbers from 400 to 1,200.'

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.

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



Rob's tips:

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

Stuart Murray

Farm Owner, Bamawm, Victoria

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

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

Stuart found stepping up to farm ownership a natural progression and he increased his ownership of stock; 'I was buying dairy cattle, as well as sheep, beef cattle and also purchasing machinery,' he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'I would like to remain an investor in the industry and a promoter of the industry. The dairy industry has a lot of potential and it needs people to sell that potential.'



Stuart's tips:

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

Farm Owner							
The role	Prerequisites	Skills needed	Rewards	Regional support programs	Training options	Resources needed	Next career step
<p>Tasks will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and services external to the business • Business planning, manage farm cash flow and financial reporting • High level of responsibility and decision making • Negotiation skills and conflict management 	Depends on farm size and productivity	<p>Every dairy region has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regional Development Program (RDP) which supports the dairy community • Dairy Australia leadership programs • Young Dairy Networks – which run events for your young staff • Community programs, footy and netball clubs etc. 	<p>For Farm Owner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Agriculture 	<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.

Note: If you are farm owner looking at moving out of active dairy farming see thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future



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 Stones 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 eg 350 cows with young stock</i>	<i>\$450,000</i>	<i>10 years</i>

Short Term Planning

What is your next role?



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



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?

Young Dairy Network regional events

Action	When
<i>Join the Young Dairy Network</i>	<i>3 weeks</i>
<i>Check the Dairy Australia website to find upcoming events</i>	<i>1 week</i>
<i>Sit down with my current boss seek his/her advice on next steps</i>	<i>Next week</i>



Planning Your Dairy Career

Download this document at: thepeopleindairy.org.au/planning-for-the-future/stepping-stones

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 Stones 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?

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

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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?

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



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