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EC00-280 Hiring Dairy Personnel: Making the Process Easier

Jeffrey F. Keown

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jkeown1@unl.edu

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Employment Application

Applicant's Name: _____

Position: **Hiring**

Dairy Personnel:

Making the Process Easier

Full-time Permanent Seasonal

Part-time Temporary Date available: _____

GENERAL INFORMATION

Are you a United States citizen? YES NO

Jeffrey F. Keown
Extension Dairy Specialist

In what state? _____

List three persons (other than relatives or past employers) who have

Name	Address



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Before the Hiring Process Begins

Position descriptions are essential. A detailed position, or job, description can help you as an employer identify and eliminate applicants who will not perform well on the job and gives you justifiable grounds for terminating an employee who does not perform the job satisfactorily.

On most dairy farms, employees can be grouped into three categories: herd managers, feeders or outdoor workers, and milkers. Therefore, you should have a written job description for each group. It is important to share the job description with every employee before starting employment so if any problem arises over work responsibilities later, you can quickly refer them to the job description.

A job description is a concise list of the duties that are expected to be done and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to do them. Also listed is the person to whom each worker will report. This is essential if you are to maintain an orderly flow of information to and from the worker. The entire management operation can come to a halt if the chain of command is unclear. This is especially important when hiring a new employee to work with long-term employees who might take advantage of new workers unless it is clear who is in charge.

In this publication are sample job descriptions for each group of workers commonly employed on dairy farms. If you are planning to hire employees, you can adapt these descriptions to meet the needs of your operation.

Please note when reading the following job descriptions that each employee has a few duties described that do not need direct supervision. The main reason workers give for leaving employment is not usually salary, but that "I was not allowed to do anything without first checking with my immediate supervisor." This is especially true when the manager works directly under the supervision of the herd owner. It's best to give the manager some slack and let he or she make some independent management decisions.

Manager's Job Description

Supervise and coordinate herd, technicians, the day-to-day operation of the dairy and upkeep of the facilities at the dairy.

Characteristic Duties and Responsibilities:

*Manage the Dairy Herd (50 percent of time):
Supervise employees in all phases of the dairy, including:*

- Ration preparation and feeding
- Raising replacements
- Milking
- Upkeep of facilities, grounds and equipment
- Pasture management
- Herd management

*Herd Health and Reproduction
(30 percent of time):*

- Treat and care for sick animals
- Help with difficult births
- Heat detection
- Breeding
- Fill in for sick and vacationing employees

*General Office Work and Procurement
(20 percent of time):*

- Keep record (herd health, production, reproduction inventories)
- Conduct monthly inventories
- Payroll
- Order supplies, repair parts, and feed
- Discuss needs and problems with sales and service representatives
- Conduct personnel evaluations
- Conduct personnel recruitment and training in consultation with herd owner

Scope and Effect of Work Output and Independent Decisions Made and Acted Upon:

Make decisions pertaining to day-to-day operations. Examples: If an animal needs to be treated or bred, call veterinarians or service personnel. Decide whether a tank of milk must be dumped, when hay should be harvested, when and what feed to order and what repairs and upkeep should be performed. Solve problems concerning herd health, failure of milking equipment or outside equipment, nutrition and pasture management.

In addition, make suggestions for budget, decide when to sell cull cows and bull calves, and sign for items costing up to \$500.

Minimum Qualifications (Education/ Experience):

- Dairy management or training in the dairy industry (2-5 years)
- Supervising experience (1 year)

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Required:

- Trained in artificial insemination
- Knowledgeable of disease and injury treatment and calf pulling
- Knowledgeable in dairy nutrition
- Ability to motivate employees
- Ability to work with all types of people
- Ability to communicate with a broad spectrum of individuals
- Knowledge of milking procedures
- Knowledge and use of Dairy Herd Improvement Records

Feeder Job Description

Primary responsibilities (accounting for approximately 70 to 80 percent of position time) will be to perform the duties associated with feeding and caring for all livestock on the dairy facility. Properly caring for dairy animals involves keeping the animal areas, lots and barns clean and free from manure and extraneous objects. The job is to be performed efficiently to allow the production of a high quality product and promote animal well-being and comfort. Examples of specific responsibilities are listed below:

Feeding Responsibilities:

1. Check all animals on a timely basis (three to four times per day) to be certain they are receiving adequate feed. Be certain clean water is available at all times.
2. Feed cows and calves in a timely manner as outlined or directed by manager.
3. Be certain lots and barns are cleaned daily or as directed by the manager.
4. Routinely check freshening area and assist in birthing process as needed.
5. Check all lots at least twice each day (dry cow, heifer and calf areas) to be certain cattle are not under stress due to weather conditions.

6. Maintain all equipment as prescribed by manufacturer's suggestions. Be certain all machinery is in working order. Notify manager immediately if any malfunctions occur.
7. Take any necessary feed or forage samples for nutrient testing as required by manager.
8. Be certain all pastures and fencing are maintained. Repair when needed.
9. Maintain all equipment and tools in an orderly manner so they are readily available to use by any employee if needed.
10. Treat sick animals and administer appropriate prescription drugs only when told by the manager.
11. Perform routine vaccinations under supervision of the manager.
12. Assist in any special projects or routine maintenance of farmstead in coordination with the manager.

Other Responsibilities (approximately 20 to 30 percent of daily work schedule) as Assigned by the Manager:

These responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Daily maintenance of free stalls
- Heat detection, A.I.
- Record keeping
- Maintenance of grounds

Milker Job Description

Primary responsibilities (approximately 70 to 80 percent of daily work schedule) will be to perform the milking operation according to the State Public Milk Ordinance.

Milking Responsibilities and Procedures:

1. Prepare milking equipment and bulk tank for milking.
2. Bring in cows for milking or help other employees bring in cows if needed or requested.
3. Wear gloves when milking to help prevent spread of mastitis-causing organisms.
4. Follow recommended premilking preparation of cattle before milking.

-
-
5. Milk all cows in an orderly, proper and consistent manner.
 6. Be certain to look at treatment records so milk from treated cows is not put into the bulk tank. **Since all milk will be sampled for various drug residues at each pickup, it is the milker's responsibility to guarantee that milk shipped meets the current State Public Milk Ordinance.** If any question or concern is expressed about the safety of any shipment, it should be tested by the milker and the results discussed with the manager immediately.
 7. Note cows that may have mastitis or other problems and inform the manager for possible treatment. **(No treatment will be done without permission of the manager.)**
 8. Clean the milking parlor, holding area and bulk tank room.
 9. Operate all milking equipment as recommended by the manager and factory specifications.
 10. After milking, be sure all machinery and sanitation procedures are followed according to manufacturer's specification and Grade A Standards of the Public Milk Ordinance.

Milking Related Activities:

1. Help get cattle into the barn if necessary.
2. Maintain treatment records and identify treated cows with appropriate markers, such as leg bands, etc.
3. Assist in ordering supplies by making a list and bringing to the manager's attention any items in short supply.
4. If unable to be present at scheduled working hours, the manager must be given sufficient notice to arrange for a substitute milker.
5. Clip udders, freeze brand and perform other procedures that promote accurate identification and animal well-being.
6. In case of an emergency, you may be called to work on a vacation or regularly scheduled day off.

Other responsibilities (approximately 20 to 30 percent of daily work schedule) as assigned by the manager. These responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Caring for springers and cows at calving
- Feeding and caring for calves
- Feeding, cleaning, and caring for milking herd
- Maintaining free-stalls
- Heat detection, A.I.
- Keeping records
- Cleaning and maintaining office building
- Maintaining grounds, pasture, fences
- Maintaining vacuum pumps

Before hiring new employees, explain fully their benefit packages (if any), such as health, workman's comp or life insurance. Also be clear about the vacation schedule, regular days off, sick leave policy and notification of unexpected absences from work.

Try to have the entire work force function as a team. Plan weekly or monthly team meetings to discuss ways to increase production efficiency or other management changes that may be needed. If you encourage an open exchange of ideas and discuss the options openly with employees and encourage participation, then it is far easier to get the work accomplished.

Once a year, sit down with all the employees and list short- and long-range goals for the dairy operation. Post these goals in a prominent location so employees are reminded of the goals that are expected during the next year. Attempt to have each employee responsible for obtaining one goal. This makes the employee feel more a member of a team rather than just an employee. If every goal is the responsibility of the team, then it may not get the attention it needs since the employees may all think that someone else is taking care of it.

Attempt to work on incentives for workers. This helps to maintain interest in a job that is mainly routine. In order to maintain interest, try to assign an extra duty to each worker weekly, or every two weeks, so the job does not become boring.

Communicate with your workers every day. Praise them when they do a job extremely well. Never discipline one employee in front of others; this lowers the self-esteem of the worker being disciplined and holds the employee up to ridicule from the others.

Conduct a yearly evaluation with each employee. List their accomplishments and discuss where they may not be performing up to your expectations. Give them the opportunity to respond — remember to listen to their concerns. Your expectations may be greater than your employee's ability and these should be openly and frankly discussed. A yearly evaluation gives you the opportunity to reiterate your expectations and gives the employee the opportunity to discuss any concerns that he/she may have. Do not tie together a planned salary increase with the evaluation. It is better to have the evaluation six months before salary changes. This six-

month period will separate the evaluation from monetary concerns, thereby giving each of you the opportunity to discuss performance without having a pay increase directly associated with the evaluation process.

Hopefully, by following some basic labor management plans you will be able to foster an open, friendly and supportive environment at the dairy facility. Having everyone know the expectations of the job, as well as feeling a part of the management team, will help the dairy enterprise prosper over time and employee turnover will be minimized.

How to Start the Hiring Process

As Midwest dairy farms increase in size, and/or the managers advance in age, more producers are turning to hired labor as a means to maintain a viable operation. Hiring a traditional farm worker is easier than hiring an individual without farm experience because the farm worker in some way has experience with the hours that are required, as well as knowledge of the unexpected problems that are certain to arise on any farmstead. As the number of workers available with farm backgrounds continues to decrease, most producers are now looking at workers without farm backgrounds to meet their needs.

Nontraditional farm employees are not as aware of farm related problems and are more familiar with the conventional eight-hour/five-day work week. Therefore, you must adequately explain the expected job responsibilities and wage scale before the applicant is hired. This upfront frankness will help to eliminate potential problems with new employees.

The entire process of hiring a new employee should start with a clear, concise and inclusive position description. This position description should contain:

1. A listing of all major duties, position responsibilities and the acceptable lines of command. Make certain the individual applying for the position knows the chain of command.
2. A listing of normal work hours and the anticipated schedule. List all holidays that will be allowed during the year, along with overtime expectations, sick leave and personal time off.

The items listed above are what you are providing for the employee. It also is vital to list your requirements for the position. They should include:

1. Education and/or training required.
2. Previous work experience. (If your only source of personnel is nonfarm oriented, then don't list farm experience required. You may want to be certain the individual applying has held a full-time position in the past.)
3. Skills required, such as a driver's license, or ability to drive a commercial vehicle.
4. Any other skill you feel will help the prospective employee meet your job expectations

A written section thoroughly outlining the total starting compensation package should be included. The beginning hourly wage along with any benefits should be clearly listed. If health insurance is offered, be certain to indicate if it is a family coverage package, or only an individual program. If it is a family package, does it include pre-existing condition coverage for spouses or dependents? What are the limits of coverage and payment amounts? It also is important to list the copayment amounts. How much, or what percentage does the employer pay and what is the employee's responsibilities? When does coverage start — immediately, after one month, etc.?

If a retirement program is available, list the company and benefits currently available when reaching retirement age. Never guarantee in writing what will be available in the future —

remember times and financial obligations will change.

In order to give employees a better understanding of the total wage and benefit package, itemize the total dollars you are going to spend on compensation each month. This should include health and life insurance, social security insurance payments, medical coverage and a reasonable cost for housing, if housing is part of the package. A good way to quantify housing costs is to check on comparable rental units in your community. Once this list is tallied, you and your prospective employee will be surprised at the actual amount going to each employee.

Incentive Programs

There are a few very simple incentive programs that are relatively easy to provide. Remember, any incentive program should be specific enough to not warrant misinterpretation. It also is advisable to have incentive programs structured so only one person is responsible for the incentive. Group incentives sometimes can lead to tensions if the perception exists that one or two on the team are not doing their fair share.

Below is a list of some common dairy incentives. You can alter the dollar amounts to suit your individual farm's cash flow and income projections.

- 1) Calving interval yearly bonus:
\$100 if 14 months; \$200 if 13 months;
\$400 if 12.5 months; \$600 if 12 months.
- 2) \$1 to \$3 for each cow detected in heat, plus an additional \$1 to \$2 per cow if she is confirmed pregnant.
- 3) Milk production incentives:
15,000 lb = \$100 per year
16,000 lb = \$200 per year
17,000 lb = \$300 per year
18,000 lb = \$600 per year
20,000 lb = \$1200 or more per year

These incentives reflect the growing management ability required to increase production beyond 17,000 pounds. This extra time spent fine tuning herd management should be rewarded.

- 4) Somatic Cell Count (SCC) Average.
Why not split the incentive you receive for SCC from the milk plant with your employees? Remember, as the SCC decreases, you will see an increase in milk production that also will yield an increase in income. If you initiate an

incentive program on SCC, your milkers will pay attention to the small details of the milking procedures that lower SCC.

- 5) Base an incentive on the percent of calves weaned. Place a certain dollar value on each calf weaned if the total calf crop weaned exceeds 90 or 95 percent on a yearly basis.

These are five simple ways to initiate an easy-to-manage and documented bonus program. A bonus program to reward job performance that is above acceptable levels enables an employee to try new management skills and maintain interest in attending farm-related meetings, such as extension or agri-business related workshops.

Now that you have clearly identified what you want in an employee, be certain to design a clear application for employment. A good application will give you enough information to allow you to choose a short list of qualified applicants to call for interviews.

Remember, nonfarm employees will be familiar with completing an application form. They will not consider it a chore, but a sign that you are a professional and are treating your employees in the same manner.

The most important information to request on the application is:

- Personal information, such as, name, address, any health related problems that may interfere with the job responsibilities, education and training. A prospective employee should not be asked to state race, creed, marital status, number of children, or age on the application form.
- Be certain to leave ample room for previous employment information. It is usually adequate to ask for five years of employment history. Ask for the applicant's salary, length of time employed and job responsibilities, as well as the employer's address and phone number.
- Be certain to ask for the names of three references, along with their addresses and phone numbers. Check the references to screen your applicants. Be sure the prospective employee signs and dates the application form.

After contacting the references call the candidates in for an interview. The interview should include a detailed breakdown of what is expected for the position, the line of command and other job related functions.

Let applicant meet the other employees. Plan a time when the candidate can talk openly with the other employees without you being present. This will tell the prospective employee you trust the other workers and treat them as equals.

Before making up your mind, talk to the other employees and ask, "Can you work with this applicant? Do you feel this applicant will fit in with the group?" Not only will this help the hiring process, but it will make your current employees realize they are a part of the team.

An example employment application form is included at the end of this publication to help you formulate your own application. Feel free to use all or any portion of this example application.

Interviewing

There are many questions employers want to ask prospective employees, most are appropriate but some should not be asked in order to comply with equal opportunity laws. The following list from the employment office of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should help clarify what kinds of questions can and cannot be asked during an employment interview.

Questions that may be asked:

(please note that some questions should be asked only after the person has been hired)

Name

You may ask whether an applicant's work records are under another name for purposes of accessing those records.

Address/Housing

You may ask the applicant's address, phone number, and/or how he or she can be reached.

Age

After hiring, you may require a copy of the person's birth certificate to prove age.

You also may ask a person's age to verify they are of legal age for a specific type of employment.

Race/color

National origin

To indicate that the institution is an equal opportunity employer, you may, after hiring, ask race and/or nationality for the purpose of affirmative action plan statistics.

Gender

To indicate that the institution is an equal opportunity employer, you may, after hiring, ask gender for the purpose of affirmative action plan statistics.

Citizenship

You may ask whether ALL applicants are legally authorized to work in the United States.

Marital/Parental/Family Status

After hiring, you may ask marital and parental status for insurance and tax purposes. You also may ask the name, relationship and address of a person who can be notified in case of an emergency.

Military Service

You may inquire about a person's service in the U.S. armed forces, including branch of service, rank attained and any job-related experience.

Education

You may ask whether the applicant has the academic, professional or vocational training required for the job and which institution provided it. You may also ask about language skills such as reading and writing foreign languages, if job related.

Criminal Record

You may inquire about convictions if the reason for the inquiry is a business necessity.

References

You may request general and work references not relating to race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, age, disability or marital status.

Organizations

You may ask about membership in professional organizations and unions and about any offices held.

Photographs

After hiring, you may require photographs for identification purposes.

Work Schedule

You may ask about an applicant's willingness to work the required schedule, and to ask if he or she has military reservist obligations.

Physical Data

You may require proof of ability to do manual labor, lifting and other written physical requirements if necessary for the job.

Disability

You may ask whether the applicant is capable of performing the essential functions of the job with reasonable accommodation.

Other Qualifications

You may inquire about any area that has direct relevance to the job.

Questions that should never be raised:**Name**

You may not ask the ethnic origin of an applicant's name; whether a woman is a Miss, Mrs. Or Ms; or request that a woman provide her maiden name.

Address/Housing

You may not ask about place or length of current and previous addresses.

Age

You may not ask age or age group of the applicant.

Race/color**National origin**

You may not make any inquiry that would indicate race, color or national origin.

Gender

You may not make an inquiry which would indicate gender unless job related. (Such jobs require written state government approval.)

Religion/Creed

You may not ask the applicant's religion or religious customs and holidays. You also may not request recommendations from church officials.

Sexual Orientation

You may not inquire about sexual preference.

Citizenship

You may not ask for date of citizenship or whether an applicant is native-born or a naturalized citizen, nor may you ask whether and applicant's parents or spouse is native born or naturalized. You may not require proof of citizenship before hiring.

Marital/Parental/Family Status

You may not ask marital status before hiring.

Family status

You may not ask the number and/or age of children, who cares for them, or if the applicant plans to have more children.

Military Service

You may not request military service records or ask about military service in the armed service of any other country, nor may you ask about the type of discharge a person received.

Education

You may not ask the racial or religious affiliation of schools attended. You also may not ask how foreign language ability was required.

Criminal Record

You may not inquire about arrests.

References

You may not request references specifically from clergy or any other persons who might reflect race, color, religion, gender, national or ethnic origin, age, disability or marital status.

Organizations

You may not request a listing of all clubs to which an applicant belongs or has belonged.

Photographs

You may request photographs before hiring.

Work Schedule

You may not ask about willingness to work any particular religious holiday.

Physical Data

You may not ask height and weight, impairment or other nonperformance related physical data.

Disability

You may not exclude disabled applicants as a class on the basis of their type of disability. (Each case must be determined on an individual basis by law.) Before hiring you may not initiate questions regarding the specific accommodations needed.

Other

You may not ask about political affiliation.

Qualifications

You may not inquire about anything not related to a bona fide requirement of the job that may present information permitting unlawful discrimination.

Employment Application

Applicant's Name: _____

Address: _____

Check all applicable for position desired.

- Full-time Permanent Seasonal
 Part-time Temporary Date available: _____

Type of position. (List in order of preference.)

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Are you a United States citizen? YES NO

2. Number of your current driver's license. _____
 In what state? _____

3. List all special skills, volunteer experience, professional or occupational licenses.

4. List three persons (other than relatives or past employers) who have knowledge of your skills and/or character:

Name	Address	Phone No.

5. **EMPLOYMENT RECORD** (List your *present* or *most recent* employer FIRST. Include U.S. Armed Forces experiences.)

Employer _____ Address _____	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Employed</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">From:</td> <td colspan="2">To:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mo.</td> <td>Yr.</td> <td>Mo.</td> <td>Yr.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Mo. Full-time</td> <td colspan="2">Mo. part-time</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="4">Salary</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Start</td> <td colspan="2">End</td> </tr> </table>	Employed				From:		To:		Mo.	Yr.	Mo.	Yr.	Mo. Full-time		Mo. part-time		Salary				Start		End	
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6. EDUCATIONAL RECORD (Give your complete educational history. Transcripts of college courses should be submitted and will be returned after review.)

Type of School	Name and Location of School	Circle Highest Grade Completed	Major Subjects	Degree, Certificate Diploma and Year Received
Elementary, Jr. High		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8		
Last High School Attended		9 10 11 12		
Post High School <small>(include college, university, technical and trade school.)</small>		Credit Hours		
Other				

7. Have you ever been convicted of a violation of law other than a minor traffic violation? Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

I certify that the information contained in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that any willful omission of facts or misrepresentation is cause for dismissal. I grant permission for my prospective employer to investigate my work references and release my prospective employer from any liability resulting from such investigation. Upon my termination, I authorize the release of reference information on my work. I agree to a pre-employment physical if required.

Signature _____

Date _____