Dairy Assistant Herd Manager

Dairy farming

Job title	Dairy Assistant Herd Manager
Department	Dairy farming
Reports to	Herd Manager
Direct reports	Herdspersons, milkers and calf rearers when deputising for the Herd Manager
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Deputy to the Herd Manager on a dairy farm. Runs the milking and herd routines day to day, leads the team on shift and takes charge of fresh-cow checks, heat detection, treatments and records. Runs the herd when the Herd Manager is off. The role is a step between herdsperson and herd manager.

Key responsibilities

Leading the daily routine

- Set the milking rota with the Herd Manager and stand in when the team is short
- Lead the team on shift so milking, feeding and bedding happen on time
- Check feed is delivered to the ration, forage is in good condition and beds are clean
- Help plan grazing or housing with the Herd Manager and move cows between groups as needed
- Train new staff in the milking routine, cow handling and farm procedures
- Order consumables such as teat dip, gloves, filters and dairy chemicals
- Report to the Herd Manager each day, and to the Farm Manager when the Herd Manager is away

Herd health, breeding and records

- Check fresh cows and sick cows each morning and treat or report them to the farm protocol
- Spot mastitis, lameness and metabolic problems early and act on them
- Dry off cows and give dry cow therapy to the vet-agreed protocol
- Detect heats, serve cows or present them for AI, and have cows ready for pregnancy diagnosis days
- Record every treatment and its milk withdrawal period so treated milk never reaches the tank
- Keep herd records and herd management software up to date

Milk quality and the parlour

- Make sure everyone follows the milking routine at every milking
- Check parlour hygiene and that the plant wash has run at the right temperature each time
- Watch somatic cell count and bacteria count results and act on any rise
- Check milk cooling and that the bulk tank wash has run properly after each collection

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- Make sure treated cows are clearly marked and milked last
- Report parlour faults and arrange repairs with the Herd Manager

Deputising for the Herd Manager

- Run the herd and the team when the Herd Manager is off or away
- Cover the Herd Manager's duties, including vet, nutritionist and AI company visits
- Make day-to-day decisions on cow health, feeding and staffing, and record what was done
- Keep the Herd Manager informed and give a full update on their return

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Several years of hands-on dairy herd experience, including milking and calving
- Able to lead a small team
- Able to recognise and act on health problems such as mastitis, lameness and metabolic disease
- Confident with herd records and herd management software
- Willingness to work early starts and a weekend rota
- Driving licence as required where the job is based

Desirable

- Level 3 agriculture qualification or a completed apprenticeship
- AI (artificial insemination) certificate where DIY AI is permitted
- Foot-trimming training
- Veterinary medicines handling training
- Telehandler and ATV certificates as required where the job is based
- Experience of robotic or rotary milking systems

Skills and attributes

- Leadership by example
- Good stockmanship
- Organisation and planning
- Clear communication with the team and the Herd Manager
- Staying calm under pressure
- Attention to detail in treatments and records

Measures of success

- Somatic cell count and bacteria counts within target
- Fertility and calving targets met
- Mastitis and lameness cases falling
- No antibiotic milk failures
- Milking rota covered every day
- Herd records complete and up to date
- No accidents or injuries

Working conditions and safety

Early starts, split shifts and a weekend and holiday rota on a working dairy farm. The work is outdoors and in the parlour in all weathers, with long periods on your feet, lifting, bending and handling large animals; PPE and training are provided. Accommodation is sometimes offered.

- Follow health and safety rules and safe systems of work, and wear the correct PPE
- Follow animal welfare, biosecurity and medicine-use procedures at all times
- Report hazards, accidents, near misses and concerns promptly

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This job description outlines the main duties of the role. It is not a complete list, and the employer may update it as the business changes, in consultation with the jobholder.

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