Dairy Herd Manager

Dairy farming

Job title	Dairy Herd Manager
Department	Dairy farming
Reports to	Farm Manager
Direct reports	Herdspeople and general farm staff
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

The Herd Manager runs the day-to-day care of the milking and dry cow herd, making sure every animal is fed, housed, moved and observed to a high standard. Working hands-on alongside the herd team, the role spots health and fertility problems early, keeps groups and records accurate, and supports the calf and heifer unit.

Key responsibilities

Feeding and water

- Deliver the total mixed ration (TMR) or set ration to each group accurately and on time
- Check feed intake every day and record refusals or sudden drops in appetite
- Push up feed through the day so cows always have access to the ration
- Keep water troughs clean, working and full at all times
- Raise feed quality or supply problems with the Farm Manager or nutritionist straight away

Herd health and welfare

- Watch cows closely for heat, illness, lameness, swelling and changes in behaviour
- Report health concerns promptly to the vet, animal health technician or Farm Manager
- Separate sick, lame or treated cows and manage them as instructed
- Give and record routine treatments, observing milk and meat withdrawal periods
- Assist at calvings and during veterinary and foot-trimming visits

Cow movement and grouping

- Bring cows to and from the parlour calmly and safely, avoiding stress and injury
- Keep groups correct by stage, such as fresh, high-yielding, late-lactation and dry cows
- Check that every animal carries a readable ear tag and replace lost tags
- Move cows between groups as calving, drying off and production change

Housing and hygiene

- Keep pens, cubicles, feed areas and walkways clean, bedded and in good repair
- Scrape passages and run slurry routines so cows stay clean and comfortable

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- Follow the farm's biosecurity rules for visitors, vehicles and incoming animals
- Report damage to gates, water systems or housing for repair

Calves and heifers

- Help with daily calf feeding and the cleaning of calf hutches and pens
- Support disbudding, tagging, vaccination and similar routine jobs under supervision
- Check heifer groups regularly for health, growth and signs of heat

Team, records and standards

- Organise and guide the herd team's daily work and lead by example
- Follow and help enforce standard operating procedures (SOPs) for every routine task
- Keep herd records up to date, including treatments, heats, movements and calvings
- Work closely with the milking, feeding and youngstock teams

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Several years' hands-on experience with dairy cows on a commercial farm
- Experience leading or coordinating a team of herd or livestock staff
- Sound working knowledge of TMR feeding and checking feed intake
- Good understanding of cow behaviour, health, welfare and biosecurity
- Experience supporting calvings and the treatment of sick animals
- Able to read ear tags and keep accurate written or electronic records

Desirable

- Diploma or certificate in agriculture, animal husbandry or a related subject
- Experience on a large or high-performing commercial dairy unit
- Training in foot trimming, mobility scoring or body condition scoring
- Training in the safe use of veterinary medicines
- Experience of tractor or telehandler work

Skills and attributes

- Good stock sense and calm, confident handling of large groups of cattle
- Early recognition of illness, lameness and heat
- Leadership and the ability to organise a small team
- Clear, prompt reporting to managers and vets
- Reliability and attention to daily routines
- Commitment to safe working and animal welfare

Measures of success

- Feed refusals recorded daily and acted on
- Sick and lame cows identified and reported the same day
- Heat detection rate against farm target
- Cow mortality and involuntary culling rates
- Housing and cow cleanliness scores
- Herd records complete and up to date

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Working conditions and safety

Indoor and outdoor work on a working dairy farm in all weathers, including early starts, weekends and a share of rota or on-call duties. The job is physically active and PPE such as boots and overalls is worn.

- 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

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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