

# Hiring Non-Farm Dairy Personnel

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The number of workers available with farm backgrounds continues to decrease; many producers are looking at non-farm background workers to meet their needs.

As Nebraska dairy farms increase in size and/or the managers advance in age, more producers are turning to hired labor as a way to maintain a viable farm unit. 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 required, as well as knowledge of the unexpected problems certain to arise on any farmstead.

Nontraditional farm employees are less aware of farm-related problems and are more familiar with the conventional eight-hour, five-day work week. Therefore, the dairy producer must adequately explain the expected job responsibilities and wage scale before the applicant is hired. This up-front frankness helps 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, among other topics:

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 provided for the employee. It also is vital to list requirements for the position. They should include:

1. Education and/or training required.
2. Previous work experience. (If the only source of personnel is nonfarm oriented, don't list farm experience required. It would be good 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 that will help the prospective employee meet the job expectations.

The next section should provide a very complete and detailed wage breakdown. The beginning wage and any bonus or incentive programs should be included. Any benefits, such as housing or health benefits, should be listed.

Looking through the World Wide Web is an excellent way to gather additional information on dairy labor questions and concerns. An excellent resource is the University of California-Berkeley. The most recent publications that may be of interest are listed below. All are available free of charge and can be downloaded for free. Please check out these Web sites. Many of these publications also are available in Spanish.

The Dairy Incentive Pay (4th Edition) is now on the Web. Even for dairymen who have no interest in pay for performance or tying pay to employee work, there is still much that will be of interest in terms of improving pregnancy rates, calf-raising practices, milk quality, feeding management, hoof care and health care.

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7dairy/7dairy.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7dairy/7dairy.htm)

At the same Web site is a complete book (18 chapters) of how to manage farm personnel, a book on working through conflicts and other resources of interest to the dairy producer.

Agricultural Labor Management: Cultivating Personnel Productivity

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7labor/001.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7labor/001.htm)

Helping Others Resolve Differences: Empowering Stakeholders

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7conflict/](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7conflict/)

2003 Dairy Wage Survey

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7res05.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7res05.htm)

Top reasons why workers leave dairies

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7calag01.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7calag01.htm)

Dairy size and pay

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7res01.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7res01.htm)

Dairy workers love their jobs

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7calag09.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7calag09.htm)

Is there such a thing as good discrimination? Yes, in hiring effective workers.

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7article/article05.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7article/article05.htm)

Milk quality incentives at one dairy pays off big

[www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7article/article16.htm](http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7article/article16.htm)

### Incentive Programs

A few very simple incentive programs are relatively easy to provide. Remember, any incentive program should be specific enough to avoid 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 listing of some common dairy incentives. Dollar amounts may be altered to best suit individual farm 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 to the detected heat.
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 = \$1,200 or more per year  
These incentives reflect the increase in management ability required to increase production beyond 17,000 lb. This extra time spent on fine-tuning the management should be rewarded.
4. Somatic Cell Count (SCC) Average. Why not split the incentive with your employees that you receive for SCC from the milk plant? Remember, as the SCC decreases, there will be an increase in milk production that also will yield an increase in income. By initiating an incentive program on SCC, 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 percent 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 above acceptable levels of job performance enables an employee to try new management skills and maintain interest in attending farm-related meetings, such as extension or agribusiness workshops.

After it is clearly quantified what is desirable in an employee, be certain to design a good, clear application for employment. This application should provide enough information to help formulate a short list to call for interviews.

Remember, non-farm applicants will be familiar with completing an application form. They will not consider it a chore, but a sign of professionalism and that they will be treated in the same manner.

The most important areas to address in the application for employment are:

- Personal information, such as name, address, any health-related problems that may interfere with the job responsibilities, education and training. A prospective employee need not state race, creed, marital status, number of children, or age on the application form.
- Be certain to leave ample room for previous employment information. Ask for the employer's address, phone number, salary and length of time worked and job responsibilities. It is usually adequate to go back five years. Use these phone numbers to check out the former employers for references.

Be certain to ask for three references, along with their addresses and phone numbers. Check the references to screen applicants. Ask the prospective employee to sign and date the application form.

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

Let the prospective employee meet all 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 the other workers are trusted and treated as equals.

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

A sample employment application form will assist in formulating an individual application.

Refer to [www.nebraskadairy.unl.edu](http://www.nebraskadairy.unl.edu) for additional information on dairy labor under the NebGuide listings.

### Index: Dairy, Business Management

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# 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 _____           |
| City _____                             | State _____ Phone _____ |
| Job Title _____                        |                         |
| Nature of Duties (Explain fully) _____ |                         |
| _____                                  |                         |
| Immediate Supervisor _____             |                         |
| Reasons for Leaving _____              |                         |

| Employed      |     |               |     |
|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| From:         |     | To:           |     |
| Mo.           | Yr. | Mo.           | Yr. |
| Mo. Full-time |     | Mo. part-time |     |
| Salary        |     |               |     |
| Start         |     | End           |     |

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Employer _____                         | Address _____           |
| City _____                             | State _____ Phone _____ |
| Job Title _____                        |                         |
| Nature of Duties (Explain fully) _____ |                         |
| _____                                  |                         |
| Immediate Supervisor _____             |                         |
| Reasons for Leaving _____              |                         |

| Employed      |     |               |     |
|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| From:         |     | To:           |     |
| Mo.           | Yr. | Mo.           | Yr. |
| Mo. Full-time |     | Mo. part-time |     |
| Salary        |     |               |     |
| Start         |     | End           |     |

|   |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
|---|---|---------------|-----|-----|--|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------|--|---------------|--|--------|--|--|--|-------|--|-----|--|
| Employer _____ Address _____                    | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">Employed</td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">From:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">To:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Mo.</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Yr.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Mo.</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Yr.</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Mo.</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Yr.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Mo. Full-time</td> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Mo. part-time</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">Salary</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Start</td> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">End</td> </tr> </table> | Employed      |     |     |  | From: | To: | Mo. | Yr. | Mo. | Yr. | Mo. | Yr. | Mo. Full-time |  | Mo. part-time |  | Salary |  |  |  | Start |  | End |  |
| Employed  |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| From:   |   | To:           | Mo. | Yr. |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Mo.   |   | Yr.           | Mo. | Yr. |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Mo. Full-time                                   |   | Mo. part-time |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Salary  |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Start   |   | End           |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| City _____ State _____ Phone _____              |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Job Title _____                                 |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Nature of Duties (Explain fully) _____<br>_____ |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Immediate Supervisor _____                      |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Reasons for Leaving _____                       |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |

|   |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
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| Employed  |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| From:   |   | To:           | Mo. | Yr. |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Mo.   |   | Yr.           | Mo. | Yr. |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Mo. Full-time                                   |   | Mo. part-time |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Salary  |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Start   |   | End           |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| City _____ State _____ Phone _____              |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Job Title _____                                 |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
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| Immediate Supervisor _____                      |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |
| Reasons for Leaving _____                       |   |               |     |     |  |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |               |  |               |  |        |  |  |  |       |  |     |  |

**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 |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|---|
| <b>Elementary, Jr. High</b>  |                             | 1 2 3 4<br>5 6 7 8             |                |   |
| <b>Last High School Attended</b>   |                             | 9 10 11 12                     |                |   |
| <b>Post High School</b><br><small>(include college, university, technical and trade school.)</small> |                             | <b>Credit Hours</b>            |                |   |
| <b>Other</b>   |                             |                                |                |   |

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