



NUFFIELD
Farming Scholarships

People. Processes. Potential: A blueprint for great team management on UK dairy farms

Written by:

Hannah Batty NSch

April 2025

A NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS REPORT

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Date of report: April 2025

*"Leading positive change in agriculture.
Inspiring passion and potential in people."*

Title	People. Processes. Potential: A blueprint for great team management on UK dairy farms
Scholar	Hannah Batty
Sponsor	The Trehane Trust
Objectives of Study Tour	To visit a wide range of businesses and identify tools and management practices that support great teamwork.
Countries Visited	UK, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Australia, Brazil, Chile
Messages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Dairy businesses should have a clearly defined vision or a "North Star" to ensure employees understand why they are there. 2) Understanding the different personalities in your team and increasing self-awareness, through tools such as personality profiling, can improve communication and team dynamics. 3) Creating better quality relationships improves team resilience and can lead to improved productivity and performance. This requires protected time and clear communication. 4) We need to meet the basic needs of the team (inductions, safe working environment, fair pay) and create a safe and trusting environment to enable people to flourish. 5) Protocols can provide a useful framework to refer to but will be more effective if team members understand the desired outcome first. 6) Team management needs input, effort and a clear plan. It doesn't just happen by itself.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UK dairy farms and associated industries currently employ around 50,000 people. We are seeing significant challenges with labour. Approximately 12.2% of dairy farms currently have a vacancy to fill. Huge advances have been made in recent years, to refine working practices and technology to improve dairy cow health, welfare and performance. Arguably, the same amount of effort hasn't been put into working out how to better manage, support and retain the people within our industry. The statistics tell us this needs to change.

Having well-motivated and well integrated team members are key to great performance and recruitment can be a costly and time-consuming exercise. The purpose of this study was to find out how different businesses set their teams up for success.

Self-awareness is an essential skill for improved communication and team dynamics. Larger businesses with corporate structures, such as Aurora Dairies in Australia, are utilising personality profiling to help their employees better understand themselves and the people they work with, creating more harmonious working relationships.

Look to any of the major businesses both inside and outside of dairy farming and you will see a clear vision stated for both employees and onlookers. A clear vision acts as a "North Star" for team members reminding them why they are there. Seeing is believing.

Utilising protocols can be useful, however we want to ensure team members become intrinsically motivated, led with heart and a desire to do a good job. This is critical in the biologically complex system that is a dairy farm. Understanding the desired outcome of a protocol allows employees to engage in the process and refine it. Connecting an individual's daily tasks with the overall success of the business can create a better feeling of autonomy and impact. This can be done informally with regular check ins or more formally, by sharing performance data.

Resources such as the "Our farm, our plan" toolkit created by Dairy Australia can provide a framework for business owners and managers to work to. Self-assessment in key areas, such as the team, can highlight weaker areas and help create a structured plan for improvement.

Throughout the world labour is a precious resource, the importance of which was stated at almost all the visits entailed in this study. However, team management solutions cannot be provided by external consultants, or a one size fits all

approach. The solutions lie within the team. Identifying how to utilise team members strengths, develop their weaknesses and engage them in the business goals is essential. Taking the time to develop and support our people will ensure our dairy businesses reach their full potential.

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Nuffield Farming Scholars are available to speak to NFU Branches, agricultural discussion groups and similar organisations.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



From the age of around five I've always had the dream of being a vet. The seed was planted when my dad said "wouldn't it be great to look after animals?" and from that day on no other career really had a chance!

Roll on 18 years and I graduated from the University of Nottingham with my vet degree in hand and the realisation that the most fun and excitement was out on farm. Not only could you make an impact on an individual animal's health and welfare, but your advice could yield improvements for the whole herd and the farmer's business too. With every farm presenting different challenges and opportunities I knew that my inquisitive nature and need for variety would be satisfied and I joined LLM Farm vets in Shropshire.

A brief sabbatical in New Zealand in 2017 gave me my first taste of international agriculture and it was reassuring to see that a cow is a cow no matter what country you are in. However, Yorkshire tea, proper ale and the green, green grass of home had me moving back to England, settling back into LLM. It is here that I now spend my time working as Clinical Director for the practice, with an amazing team of vets and support staff. We pride ourselves on being proactive and committed to meeting the needs of the animals we care for, our clients and their businesses.

No day is the same as a farm vet, which is one of the reasons I love my job so much! I'm lucky enough that I can take my daft Fox red Labrador, Barry, everywhere with me and when I'm not working, we are usually found wandering in the Lakes or relaxing in a pub garden, with whichever local ale is on tap!



CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO MY STUDY SUBJECT

I have a dream: happy cows, happy people, and happy businesses.

I've often joked that I became a farm vet because I don't like people. I've come to realise how wrong I was. I absolutely love visiting our clients, supporting them in caring for their herds, and understanding what drives them. I strive to help them grow their businesses. Yet, one thing is clear: people are tricky!

As a dairy vet without prior agricultural experience, I am continually amazed by the opportunities, working conditions, job satisfaction, and sense of autonomy that this industry can offer. However, I frequently hear about challenges related to attracting and retaining staff. That's before we move onto helping employees flourish.

Recruitment has undeniably become tougher since Brexit, with a notable shortage of skilled labour and rising employment costs. According to ARLA's 2023 report, 56% of dairy farmers find it more difficult than ever to recruit, and 16% fear this may force them out of the industry. We need to address this issue, but practical solutions seem scarce.

Agriculture has historically relied on family labour, however with the growth of many dairy businesses the need to employ external employees has increased. Every industry competes for talent, and from an outsider's perspective, farming does not prioritise how it prepares its workforce for success. Though time and money are always limited, investing in people can yield tremendous returns. I want to help farmers tap into this resource.

So, why does a vet like me care so much about people?

I believe the role of the vet is evolving from reactive disease treatment to proactive and preventative care. While the industry can set targets for reducing antimicrobial use or improving longevity to lessen carbon footprints, we must consider all of the factors that will contribute to our success in achieving these goals. Whilst environmental and management practices have been extensively researched and significantly invested in, I believe we're overlooking a crucial element: the human factor. My vision may seem simple, but I firmly believe there's a direct connection between the well-being of cows and the people who care for them.

My journey has been about identifying key factors in team management that achieve this vision of happy cows, happy people, and happy businesses. What are



the ingredients for team success? How can we better support those who care for our animals? How do we keep our teams motivated?

This report aims to explore how we can better manage teams within the dairy industry to ensure health, welfare, and profitability. How can we unite everyone in working toward better lives for our cows?

While this report may not provide all the answers (each business is unique) I hope it serves as a blueprint or reference point to help your team thrive. Whether you're having a tough day or feeling a disconnect within your team, take a moment, make a brew, and I hope this report can offer suggestions for you to consider that may help you to maximise your businesses' people, processes, and potential'.

After all, the various gifts and talents required for a successful farm business do not all grow on one pair of legs" (Joel Salatin, *Letters to a Young Farmer*), and one must remember it takes a team effort to be successful" (Ben Burkett, *Letters to a Young Farmer*).



CHAPTER 3: MY STUDY TOUR

When planning my study tour, I had several objectives in mind. My report aims to be practical, providing easy-to-implement ideas for farming businesses. I wanted to engage with individuals who could share valuable insights, tips, and successful strategies from their own experiences of managing a team.

In the UK, the average dairy farm typically has between 160 (AHDB: Defra 2022) and 222 cows (Kingshay s Dairy Costings Focus Report, April 2024). I visited several units of this size to ensure my report was relevant to the UK dairy farmer as of today.

However, the overall trend indicates a decline in the number of dairy farms, while the size of existing farms is increasing (AHDB: UK dairy producer numbers dropped by 4.5% from October 2022 to October 2023). This suggests that future farm teams may consist of more employees. Consequently, I sought to visit larger operations to understand the structures and team management tools they employ to better support the UK dairy farm of the future.

Additionally, I aimed to explore practices outside the dairy industry for inspiration and ideas.

Country	Month/ Year	Comments
Ireland	May 2023	Visits to Tirlan (Irish dairy cooperative) and several dairy farms
Netherlands	June 2023	Nuffield Dairy tour visiting several dairy units and Lely headquarters
Scotland	July 2023	Several large-scale dairy businesses
Italy	October 2023	Boehringer supported trip to the calf Xpert academy discussing Lean management
Australia	Nov/ Dec 2023	Visits to a number of dairy businesses ranging in size and structure across West Victoria and Tasmania
UK	Jan 2024	AHDB Agrileader conference
Brazil	Feb 2024	Visited a variety of businesses including dairy, poultry, beef, flower and seed enterprises



Chile	Feb 2024	Visits included arable and fruit growing enterprises, viticulture, dairy and mixed farming businesses
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CHAPTER 4: WHY ARE WE HERE?

A team can be defined as:

a number of people who act together as a group, either in a sport or in order to achieve something" (Cambridge Dictionary definition 2024)

As a vet I get the opportunity to work with many different farm teams ranging in size and diversity. Some of these businesses can be small, 100 cow units with the team consisting of only 2 people, most often family, whilst others may employ 20 plus members of staff with an owner who does not milk the cows themselves.

A large majority of these businesses exist due to generational succession, where people have been exposed to the purpose of the business from a young age. However, with a general shift within the dairy industry to larger farms, we now see people from outside the family unit forming a significant part of the farm team. I wanted to understand how businesses with no family employees communicated what they were hoping to achieve. However, during this journey I realised I had been a bit blinkered in my thinking. Family businesses need a clarity of purpose just as much as those with employees. How can we make sure everyone understands why we are here?

4.1 Vision

A vision is a clear statement of intent that summarises the goals of a business.

One of my first Nuffield visits was to Tirlan, formerly Glanbia PLC, an Irish dairy cooperative. I wanted to understand how larger businesses set the vision for their employees. The business had been through a significant period of change having transitioned from a cooperative, to a PLC and, most recently, back to a cooperative. With various stakeholders to consider Tirlan needed to ensure it met the demands of its farmer shareholders (and producers), 2300 employees and suppliers. I met Helen Kiely, Head of Culture and Employee Engagement. She explained that this change was seen as an opportunity and initially external support was sought to help the board and executive set the vision for the business.



Tirlan's vision (from website)

Many of the people I visited during this trip described their vision as a "North star", setting the direction for employees. With a business as multifaceted as Tirlan this had to be applicable to whichever part of the chain an employee was involved in. Meeting with Helen and hearing the vision above left me feeling excited, optimistic and inspired. The vision was a positive statement that was easy to understand and visualise. As an employee it meant that no matter your role within the business, you knew why you were doing what you were doing. This was a much more meaningful purpose than simply making money. It got me thinking. How many of the dairy farms and businesses that I work with share their vision with both their employees and other stakeholders?

On returning I started asking questions to some of the clients I work with. In many instances it was challenging to define the business goals beyond "producing milk" or "being profitable". Whilst those growing up within a farming business may know from a young age the purpose of their family business through their lives on the farm or conversations at the kitchen table can the same be said for those new to farming? We know there is a labour issue within the dairy industry and that we need to begin attracting and retaining people from outside of agriculture. This means we need to ensure we are effectively communicating those kitchen table discussions to people who have no family ties to the business. Surely sharing the vision of a business with the team could help ensure people remain motivated and feel like they can make a difference irrespective of ownership? So I looked for examples of this happening.



4.2 Seeing is believing

Rosemont agriculture, in Tasmania, an equity partnership between Rob and Jo Bradley and James and Sophie Greenacre, managed by James, showed just how impactful this could be. The farm has 1300 milking cows, in a block calving system.



Rob Bradley and James Greenacre of Rosemont agriculture

The vision below was pinned up on the wall for everyone to see:

“ Vision: Optimise farm profitability and sustainability by having healthy cows, productive pastures and efficient, happy team members ”

This statement was not groundbreaking, elaborate or complicated. It was a clear statement of intent for everyone within the team, outlining the goals of the business. Granted there was mention of profitability, but the clarity of how this could be achieved set it apart from many other businesses I have visited. Team members knew that healthy cows, productive pasture management and they themselves contributed to achieving business success.

James was incredibly passionate about creating a positive culture and walking around the farm it was clear to see that this vision was not just written on the wall but lived and breathed by everyone within. The simplicity and clarity of this vision really struck a chord with me. The fact that this business wanted to create happy people as part of its vision showed those working within it how much they were cared about.



I'm incredibly fortunate that I get to visit a wide range of dairy businesses in my role. But there are very few where I have seen a statement of intent written on the wall for both employees or visitors to the farm. Why is this? For many farmers writing down a set of words on a piece of paper may feel a bit silly, unnecessary or too "corporate". Or is there a fear that writing it down means you are held to account by both yourself and others?



Healthy cows grazing productive pasture at Rosemount agriculture

There is strong evidence that writing down a goal means you are more likely to achieve it. From just spending an afternoon at Rosemount agriculture it was clear to see that their vision of healthy cows, productive pastures and a happy team was being achieved. Seeing truly was believing!



CHAPTER 5: WHO IS IN YOUR TEAM?

On many of the visits I embarked on I saw strong teams that worked well together on both the good days and the bad. The working environment that is a dairy farm can be challenging with large workloads, dynamic situations and unpredictable factors to bear in mind too. How can we ensure we have a team that can cope with all of this?

5.1 Personality profiling

You need to understand yourself before you can begin to appropriately manage someone.”

This insight did not come from the paddocks of an Australian dairy farm but rather from the boardroom on the 117th floor of a high-rise in Melbourne. Ben James, CEO of Aurora Dairies, began his journey in the dairy industry at the age of 19 as a farmhand. He now leads an operation that cares for 47,000 cows, 22,000 heifers, and employs over 500 staff. While he is heavily involved in asset and operations management, his key focus is on talent acquisition and understanding the people within the business.



Ben James, CEO Aurora Dairies

Having navigated the transition from cows to people management, Ben shared valuable insights and tools that benefit the large workforce at Aurora Dairies. One such tool is personality profiling, specifically DISC or the “Birds” model. DISC profiling improves communication, teamwork, and productivity by categorising individuals into four main profiles based on their perception of themselves in relation to their environment. The Birds or “DOPE” personality test, based on the



same principles, is designed to be more relatable and engaging, making it easier for everyone to understand.

Personality profiling helps identify key traits, enhancing our understanding of how our preferred behaviours and communication styles impact those around us. People can be broadly categorised as follows:

DISC Profile	Bird Analogy	Strengths	Weaknesses
Dominant	Eagle	Bold, highly assertive, results-focused, decisive	Direct, can lack sensitivity, controlling, struggles to delegate
Influencing	Peacock	Charismatic, enthusiastic, visionary, positive	Poor with details, impatient, bad timekeepers
Steady	Dove	Empathetic, cooperative, supportive	Dislikes confrontation, less assertive, can be risk-averse
Compliant	Owl	Analytical, detail-oriented, strategic	Takes time to make decisions, can be stubborn

Authors summary of different personality profiles

By becoming more self-aware of the different personality traits, including our own, we can improve our communication with others. Since using this tool in the field I've found that it also helps facilitate discussions around some of the less desirable personality traits in a relaxed and humorous manner, fostering openness within the team.

Ben emphasised that this approach isn't about changing who you are but about being authentic. Despite the size of the business, he noted that a "one size fits all" approach to team management is ineffective. Understanding oneself enhances awareness of behaviours and how one's communication style affects others. This understanding helps teams work together more harmoniously, leveraging strengths and addressing weaknesses effectively.



5.2 Starting on the right track

Whilst it is important to get to know your current team, it is also essential to ensure new employees are welcomed into the business in the right way. Matetic Vineyards in Chile had vast experience of this, inducting new people regularly due to the seasonal nature of harvest, with a wide range of nationalities. Speaking with Carlos Moreno, one of the team leaders, it was apparent that there was another additional layer of complexity, the nature in which the wine was made.

Matetic vineyards pride themselves on making biodynamic wine, meaning they harvest paying attention to the cycles of the moon, a process very different to many conventional vineyards. Inductions were essential to demonstrate their wine making process, share information about these differences and ensure understanding of why it was important and to ensure everyone was rowing in the same direction”, from vineyard to cellar. A key way of doing this was inviting new starters to taste the product and understand the results of their efforts. There was a real culture of openness here, where the wine was discussed with the whole team, ensuring everyone believed in the process. New team members were welcomed in and there was a real family feel. The culture was set from the start.

For most businesses, day one of someone's employment is the chance to set the tone and define the expectations of what being part of that team means. I have heard of a wide range of experiences on dairy farms, from great inductions with shadowing, support and time to settle in to being left in the milking parlour with minimal direction. Matetic vineyards treated inductions as an opportunity, vital to employee engagement and pivotal in creating a high quality saleable product. There are many parallels with this and dairy businesses, both requiring care and attention for business profitability. Matetic's attitude was refreshing, with the fruits of their labour evident in the quality of the end product.

5.3 Making the time to get to know people

We need to remember to humanise people”.

Finding a common ground can help to build both a rapport and trust. This was summarised brilliantly by Jordy Vallance when reflecting on her father Bruce's ability to build a bond. The family milk 840 three-way cross block calvers, in conjunction with Issac, their farm manager and four full time employees. Despite having no real interest in football, when a new member of the team professed a passion for supporting the local team, Bruce made sure to keep an eye on the



scores and ask about the game. It wasn't because he had a new found interest, instead he wanted to demonstrate to his employee that he cared about the things that were important to him.

Simple things like checking in about the weekend or just asking how someone is doing can be really revealing. Even more so when their performance within the workplace might not be as you'd hoped. Sometimes issues outside of the workplace can present themselves in poorer performance and by gently exploring how that person is in themselves, giving them a chance to talk and building trust you might find you get their performance back on track.



CHAPTER 6: HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO IT?

A key aim from my Nuffield project was to be able to share practical and simple solutions that dairy farmers can implement to improve people management on their own units. I remember the words of Richard Gardener, owner of Annandale partnership, a mixed dairy and sheep enterprise in Tasmania.

Dairy farming is simple. The hard part is keeping it simple”.

So how can we make people management simple?

6.1 Planning

Dairy Australia has prioritised team management in its three-year strategic plan for resource and investment. As a government-matched, levy-funded body, it supports dairy farm businesses through services like research and training. My visit to WestVic Dairy, one of the eight regional divisions, provided valuable insight into how resources are made available to dairy producers.

During my visit, it was clear that people management support and training were top priorities. Jacinta Langdon, Workforce Attraction Project Lead, highlighted that many business owners hesitate to address people management, but encouraged them to view it as an opportunity to be proactive rather than avoid it. In her own words we need to “stop being scared” of it. Similar insights were shared by Matt Wood, Workforce Planning and Action.

Dairy Australia offers structured resources that make self-assessment and identifying areas for improvement straightforward. One widely used tool, “Our Farm, Our Plan,” helps farmers set long-term goals, improve performance, and manage risk, with a dedicated section on people management. We mustn't forget that similar resources are available to UK dairy farmers, such as AHDB's online tools and library. However, it does appear that many farmers still don't know quite how to start. This is where Dairy Australia's facilitated meetings stand out, providing farmers with a chance to work through resources, ask questions, and start building a proactive approach to managing their businesses.

Reflecting critically on one's farm can be the first step toward meaningful improvement. Similarly run meetings take place in the UK, both privately run and those facilitated by AHDB. The message is clear. These meetings work. AHDB's updated 2024 report highlighting “the characteristics of top performing dairy farms in the UK” also echoed this sentiment. Knowing what you want to achieve is important so you know when you have got there and when to “celebrate”.



Remembering the opportunities that meetings such as those run by Dairy Australia or AHDB offer here is key. It allows business owners to draw on the experiences of others in a similar position and discuss challenges with people management in a safe space, learning from each others' mistakes or picking up tips. Taking time to work on the business, not in it, gives the thinking space to come up with a clear and practical plan for team management.



The team at WestVic Dairy Australia

6.2 Protocols: Start with the desired outcome

Sometimes the simplest things resonate with you. A protocol is a standard set of rules or instructions on how to get a job done. I have written hundreds of protocols ranging from how to clean a calf feeding bucket to how to treat a cow with milk fever. However, from personal experience and the shared frustrations of farmers I work with, people don't always stick to the rules. Whilst I was in Brazil, visiting an extensive beef operation I was forced to reflect on why those carefully written protocols might not always work.

Itemar was the herd manager at Fazenda Cachoeira, a beef enterprise, owned by Bernhard Kiep, in Sao Paulo state. Caring for around 1000 Nelore cattle and their offspring, he prided himself on leading his team with heart and passion. Itemar made me question how I have utilised protocols in the past.



The team at Fazenda Cachoeira

He was adamant that we often try to take autonomy out of some of the tasks that need completing on farm and think just telling someone to do something will be effective. Instead, he suggested, we should start any task by explaining the outcome. What do we want to achieve? The more I reflected on it, the more it made sense. We have to accept that people may approach a problem differently, but if the desired outcome is achieved does that matter? We are more likely to get buy in from the people actually doing the job if they have a chance to input into the methods we use to get there.

However, with more and more discussions around improved efficiencies and lean management (a process of optimising efficiency through reduced waste and maximising value to customers) this felt somewhat contradictory to my understanding of this principle.

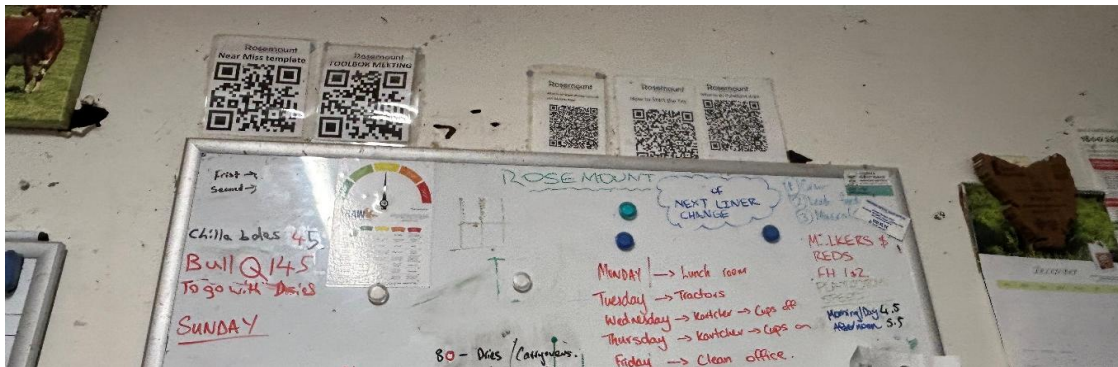
I don't think the two approaches have to be at odds with one another. We need to stop treating people like robots. Asking our team members to come up with solutions will get more buy in and adherence. Sometimes the most novel ideas can come from the most surprising of team members, and not always the leaders or advisors. By utilising the "outcome first, protocol to follow" approach we stop trying to control people with external forces and instead fire up the internal motivation within our teams. Once this first step has been ticked off, then we can get to recording the agreed protocol. Our employees are more likely to care about the impact of their ideas therefore ticking one of the main goals of lean management... adding more value!



6.3 Present information in multiple ways

Whilst visiting the previously mentioned Rosemount agriculture I was really impressed with the different ways in which they presented information to their team. Take for example protocols. Whilst I mentioned that we need people to understand the desired outcome for a protocol we still need to make sure we write them down so everyone remembers what to do. However, finding a piece of paper can be tricky when in the middle of a task.

Dotted around the farm at Rosemount agriculture were handy QR codes. In today's modern world most people have a smart phone and so employees could quickly scan the code and were directed to either a written protocol or a video that showed how to perform the task they were about to do.



Handy QR codes for various tasks at Rosemount agriculture

By providing a visual reference it also removed some of the issues that can come with language barriers or reading skills and allowed the employee to check they were doing things correctly.

6.4 Focused time to talk

Another useful insight from Australian dairy farmer Joey Conheady was the benefit of utilising toolbox talks.

Joey owns a herd of 600 Autumn block crossbreds and returned to farming after completing a degree in economics. He was quick to highlight the importance of communication.

He held 15 minute quick fire talks every morning irrespective of the time of year and how busy the team were.





These fast paced meetings allowed for 3 objectives to be met:

1. The priorities for the day were discussed and highlighted to the team.
2. Any potential blockers (odd jobs/ broken equipment etc) were identified, and solutions could be discussed.
3. The whole team had the chance to talk and communicate in a protected time slot helping understand each other's challenges and aims for the day

In the busy working environment that is a dairy farm, if time is not allocated and prioritised for communication sometimes it just won't happen. By protecting this talking time, Joey was able to ensure key messages were shared within the team. As a leader he could pick up on how people were feeling, and decisions could be shared with and explained to everyone.

Whilst meetings such as this happen on many farms, another key example being Farming Partners farms based in Ireland, I still think there is scope for more farms to utilise them. Seeing planning and talking time as equally important as "doing" time can avoid expensive mistakes and improved efficiencies... some of the key aims of the previously mentioned lean management.



CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

During my Nuffield journey, one key message resonated time and again:

People are key!

While significant efforts have been made to improve the welfare of our dairy herds, in my experience on farm there are still massive opportunities to be made in better supporting and enhancing the welfare of our people. With labour recruitment and retention being major challenges for dairy farming, we must implement changes to secure its future.

The first essential element for any team is a clear goal—a sense of purpose and a compelling “why.” So many of the businesses I visited could define this clearly for me. But can we say the same for our UK dairy farms? Whilst business owners may have an idea, in my experience team members working on farms don't always know why they do what they do... other than that they have been told to do it. Providing more clarity and transparency on what the bigger aims of the business are will get buy in from team members. This cannot just be financial. People need to understand the business objectives, and it is the leaders' responsibility to define and communicate these effectively.

Once a clear goal is established, we must create the right environment for our people, just as we do for the animals they care for. This starts with meeting basic needs: safe working conditions, thorough inductions, fair pay, and the necessary tools to perform their jobs effectively. Take the time to reflect on what you do here. Are you setting people up for success from the start? Would you look at yourself as an employer of choice?

The best teams I saw operated in an environment of trust, respect, and autonomy. I think back to the words of Itemar, the herd manager of an impressive Brazilian beef unit “you cannot create an environment of trust without trusting.” Team members need to feel valued, and communication plays a crucial role in this. To put it simply, we need to make time to talk. Protected time for discussions about priorities and blockers will help to keep your team on track.

By instilling a sense of autonomy, individuals will feel empowered in their roles, leading to increased creativity and motivation. It is important for people to have the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them. While protocols can provide helpful frameworks, we must clearly explain the desired outcomes first to improve compliance and engagement.

Effective team management does not happen by chance. It requires reflection, planning and proper integration within our dairy businesses, demanding both



time and investment. I truly believe that with effort and engagement the rewards will be evident: happy cows, happy people, happy businesses.



CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Dairy businesses should have a clear vision or “North Star”. What is the direction and destination of your business? What goals should your team be striving for? Write this down and share with employees.
- 2) Team management needs input, effort and clear planning. Every business owner should take time to sit down and reflect on their current performance in this area. Find the areas you can improve on that will yield the most benefit.
- 3) Creating better quality relationships improves team resilience, creates a more harmonious working environment and can lead to better productivity and performance. This requires protected time and clear communication. Business leaders should identify when the best time to do this is and stick to it.
- 4) We should all seek to improve our self-awareness to allow for more effective communication. Tools such as personality profiling can help us better understand our natural communication styles and those of the people we work with.
- 5) Protocols can provide a useful framework to refer to but will be more effective if team members understand the desired outcome of a protocol first.
- 6) Great teams do not just happen by chance! All business owners should reflect regularly on their people management strategies, performance and weaknesses and seek to continually improve to be an employer of choice!



CHAPTER 9: AFTER MY STUDY TOUR

My key aims when applying for a Nuffield scholarship were to broaden my horizons, challenge my perceptions and give myself the space to think about “what next”. Having been a clinical vet for eleven years I still love the day-to-day job and there is no buzz that matches that of solving a tricky calving presentation and delivering new life into the world. But what I’ve discovered is that I get really excited about creating change for the better and helping others realise their potential. I don’t need to be the person who directly solves a problem to get a sense of job satisfaction.

Whilst there will always be sick cows to treat, fertility visits and the occasional calving, I believe the dairy vet of the future needs to be different. We need to ensure the advice we give is more holistic and considers the people managing the cows we treat.

My initial focus has been on drip feeding some of my learnings into daily farm visits. Be that asking a client to reflect on their own personality type, clarifying what their goals for the next twelve months are or just being a sound board whilst offering suggestions on how to tackle a problem.

I’m not going to stop banging the drum about investing in people. Whilst it might not be as exciting as a shiny, new John Deere, or as simple as downloading a new app for medicine recording, without people we won’t have an industry. I’m hoping that by factoring this into my on-farm discussions or by creating opportunities for farmers to reflect on “the human factor” I can help business owners support their people as much as their cows.

Finally, I want to become more involved in mentoring. Nuffield is about network and sharing what we have learnt. The more we share the better the collective becomes. Despite saying I became a vet because I don’t really like people, I think my future involves more than just treating animals. I am forever indebted to this industry for taking me in and making me feel part of it. I want to help share the tools for team success far and wide, continue connecting people with each other and keep reflecting on what is truly important.

He aha te mea nui o te ao

What is the most important thing in the world?

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

It is the people, it is the people, it is the people

(Maori proverb)



CHAPTER 10: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS

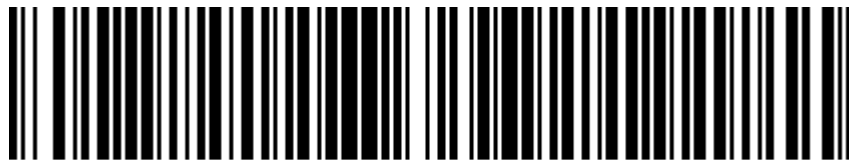
Firstly, I must thank my generous sponsors, The Trehane Trust, to whom I will forever be indebted to for giving me this opportunity. Your support has broadened my knowledge of agriculture, given me the confidence to speak boldly and experience the adventure of a lifetime.

To my Nuffield mentor, Rob Bebbington. Your tireless patience, regular check ins and honest chats have been immeasurably valuable. You provided more than just bacon sandwiches and have become a friend for life. Thank you!

I am so very proud to call myself part of the Nuffield 2023-year group. We are a varied bunch representing the whole spectrum of the industry, but through our similarities and differences have formed an incredibly special and unique bond. From late night chats over one too many glasses of wine to hikes in the Lake District this group of people have challenged me, asked me the deep questions and made me reflect not just on agriculture but so much more. Thank you for your honesty, your sincerity and most of all your friendship. A special mention to Izak Van Heerden, whom I travelled Brazil and Chile with. Your attitude to life, fearlessness to ask the difficult questions and cool calm exterior during a particularly interesting taxi journey across Brazil has changed me for the better.

To the people across the world who gave up their time to support me on my journey, from the heart of Tasmania to the depths of Brazil. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, your homes and your experiences. Nuffield is more than just a scholarship. It is a family. Thank you for welcoming me in.

Finally, my team at home. My own family and my work family. Thank you for listening to my wild ideas, offering words of advice and for always being there. I can honestly say our team at LLM are some of the most invested, passionate and caring people I know. Your commitment to our shared vision and hard work in the face of challenge are a constant source of reassurance and pride. Thank you for letting me be me!



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