

THE DAIRY CULTURE COACH

Helping You Manage Your Multicultural Team for Success



Human Resource Management on Dairy Farms

Securing a reliable workforce is a major concern on the minds of dairy farmers across the United States, and our corner of New York is no exception. As farmers are striving to attract and retain workers, the need for improved human resource management (HRM) practices on the farm is apparent. Over the past few years, I've fielded more and more questions about HRM. The need is especially critical for farms with Hispanic employees. Communication and cultural barriers make day-to-day management more difficult, and the different methods that managers use to overcome these barriers lead to varying levels of success. Some of the resulting problems are protocol drift, misunderstandings about pay and benefits, poor upkeep of worker housing, and ultimately, disengaged employees and high employee turnover.

I recently finished a project funded by the New York Farm Viability Institute, which allowed me to work with six dairy farm managers on their Human



Resource Management (HRM) practices over a period of eight months. Each farm filled out a self-assessment to help prioritize the areas of HRM that they wanted to work on first. The chart below shows the practices that the farms implemented.

Human Resource Management Practice	# of Farms that Implemented
Improving Management of Employer-Provided Housing	2
Creating Standard Operating Procedures	3
Sharing Performance Metrics w/ Employees	2
Creating a Communication Center	1
Creating Job Descriptions	3
Improving New Hire Paperwork	2

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Vocabulary

It's hot out— Hacer calor
 Fly —la Mosca
 Mosquito—el Mosquito
 Screen—el Mosquitero
 Fan—el Ventilador
 Air Conditioner—el Acondicionador
 Garbage— la Basura
 to Rot— Pudrir
 Shut the window —Cerrar la ventana

The areas where I saw the most immediate benefits were the topics that had to do with improving the training of and communication with employees (the first four topics listed above). In a post-project survey, several managers observed improved communication with their employees and more respect from them. Others felt that their employees have a better understanding of their expectations for them and overall farm goals. Two managers said that they felt that they had created more work for themselves, although the changes should make their jobs easier in the future.

In addition, I collected data about employee turnover and the employees' organizational commitment for each of the six farms. Employee turnover did not change drastically over the period of the project, and in fact, increased from 11.7% to 13.6%. It's possible that turnover may decrease over time, as the implemented HRM practices become routine. Some managers expressed an interest in tracking employee turnover on an ongoing basis to help them assess their management practices. The organizational commitment survey provided insight into what makes employees feel committed to their workplace. Employees responded that their commitment was based on financial necessity and working with good people.

HRM continues to be an opportunity for improvement on dairy farms in Western New York. Farms will be most successful when they prioritize one or two HRM practices to start with, and look to other farmers, consultants and other outside resources for guidance and support along the way.

Are you interested in implementing new HRM practices on your farm? Not sure where to start? Contact Libby for resources and ideas. You can also check out some of the resources from [Cornell's Ag Workforce Development program](#).

Summer Housing Reminders– Recordatorios Sobre las Casas en el Verano

After a cool, wet spring, these last couple of weeks have been quite a reminder of how hot and muggy summer can be in Upstate New York! With that in mind, here are a few reminders for those living in farm-owned housing.

No Air Conditioning?- Many people in New York do not have air conditioning. Older houses with basements often stay quite cool in the summer. Buying a few fans can help. You can also keep the house cooler by opening the windows at night, and closing them and drawing the shades during the day.

Window Air Conditioning Units– First and foremost, these units need to be correctly installed so

that they drain outside. Otherwise, water can drip on the floor all summer and rot the floor. Ask for help if you're not sure how to install it correctly yourself. If it gets too cool in the house, turn the AC down. Don't open windows or doors unless you have turned the AC off. This wastes energy.

Windows– If you're leaving your windows open to cool your house, make sure that you close them when you leave the house in case of rain. In addition to creating a security risk, leaving windows open while you're gone could lead to wet floors and ruined property.

Flies & Mosquitos– Only keep open windows that have screens in them. Leaving doors and windows

wide open with no screens could lead to LOTS of bugs getting in the house. If that has already happened, buy some low-cost fly ribbon to control the situation. (See photo below).

Refrigeration– While important all year, it’s especially important to keep all perishable goods in the refrigerator during the summer. Even fruits and veggies can spoil quickly in hot weather and lead to an infestation of fruit flies. While they aren’t harmful, they might drive you nuts!

Garbage– Last but not least, take the garbage out regularly! Stinky garbage will attract flies and cockroaches.

Después de una primavera tarde y húmeda, las últimas semanas han sido un buen recuerdo que los veranos en el norte del estado de Nueva York suelen ser calurosos y húmedos! Tomando eso en cuenta, aquí hay unas recordatorios para los que viven en casas que pertenecen al rancho.

¿No Tiene Acondicionador?– Muchas personas en Nueva York no tienen un acondicionador. Las casas viejas con sótanos pueden mantenerse bastante fresco en el verano. Comprar un par de ventiladores puede ayudar. También se puede mantener la casa más fresca por abrir las ventanas en la noche y cerrarlas y las cortinas en el día.

Acondicionadores para las Ventanas– Antes que todo, es importante instalarlos para que el agua drene para afuera. Si no, agua puede gotear en el piso para el verano y causar que el piso se pudre. Pide ayuda si no está seguro como instalarlo de la manera correcta. Si se pone demasiada fresca en la casa, baje el acondicionador. No abren las ventanas o puertas hasta que haya apagado el acondicionador. Eso gaste energía.

Ventanas– Si deja abiertas las ventanas para refrescar la casa, asegurarse de cerrarlas cuando salga de la casa por si llueva. Además de crear un riesgo para la seguridad, dejarlas abiertas podría resultar en pisos mojados y propiedad arruinada.

Moscas y Mosquitos– Solamente dejen abiertas las ventanas que tengan mosquiteros. Dejar abiertas puertas y ventanas sin mosquiteros podría resultar en que entren MUCHOS insectos en la casa. Si eso ya haya pasado, compre “fly ribbon.” (Mire la foto abajo).

Refrigeración– Aunque es importante todo el año, es especialmente importante guardar toda la comida perecedera en la refrigeradora durante el verano. Hasta las frutas y verduras pueden pudrir rápidamente en el calor y resultar en una infestación de moscas de fruta. Aunque no son dañinos, ¡sí molestan!

Basura– De último, pero siempre muy importante, ¡saque la basura con frecuencia! Basura apestosa puede atraer moscas y cucarachas.



Fly Ribbon– a pack of 10 costs \$5 at Walmart . Un paquete de 10 cuesta \$5 en Walmart. www.walmart.com

Animal Handling Webinars—Seminarios Web sobre el Manejo de Animales

In many parts of rural Latin America, animals generally aren't given the same level of care as they are in the U.S. With that in mind, it's important not to make assumptions



A puppy with typical Guatemalan dog food—leftover tortillas. Photo by Libby Eiholzer.

about your employees' ideas around animal welfare.

Check out the recordings of our Spanish Dairy Webinars on Cow Behavior and Movement. The videos can be ac-

cessed anytime using the links provided. Excellent presentations entirely in Spanish. *Mire las grabaciones de nuestros seminarios web en español sobre el comportamiento y manejo de vacas. Se puede ver los videos en cualquier momento usando los vínculos proveídos. Son presentaciones excelentes y completamente en español.*

The movement of cows to and from the parlor/

El movimiento de vacas hacia y desde la parla (30 mins.)

Presenter/Presentadora: Dr. Paula Ospina ,QMPS https://youtu.be/Sa3DD25KI_Q

Moving Cows and Cow Behavior/Manejo y Comportamiento de Vacas (30 mins.)

Presenter/Presentador: Collin McCarthy - Cargill, <https://youtu.be/0LVc-4k4OjQ>

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Check out our website!

<https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu>



Stay tuned for the next issue of *The Dairy Culture Coach* in September! To sign up, email Libby.

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Through educational programs and other teaching opportunities, the NWNY Team seeks to build producers' capacities to:

- Enhance the sustainability of their businesses
- Enhance profitability and other aspects of economic performance of their businesses
- Practice environmental stewardship
- Enhance employee well-being and satisfaction
- Provide safe, healthy agricultural products in ways that are safe to farm owners and employees and their families and neighbors
- Provide leadership for enhancing relationships between the agricultural sector and the general public

We look forward to working with you in your farming and ag-related ventures in NWNY. Together we can keep the agricultural economy competitive, maintain a comfortable standard of living and be conscientious stewards of our natural environment.