

FACTSHEET

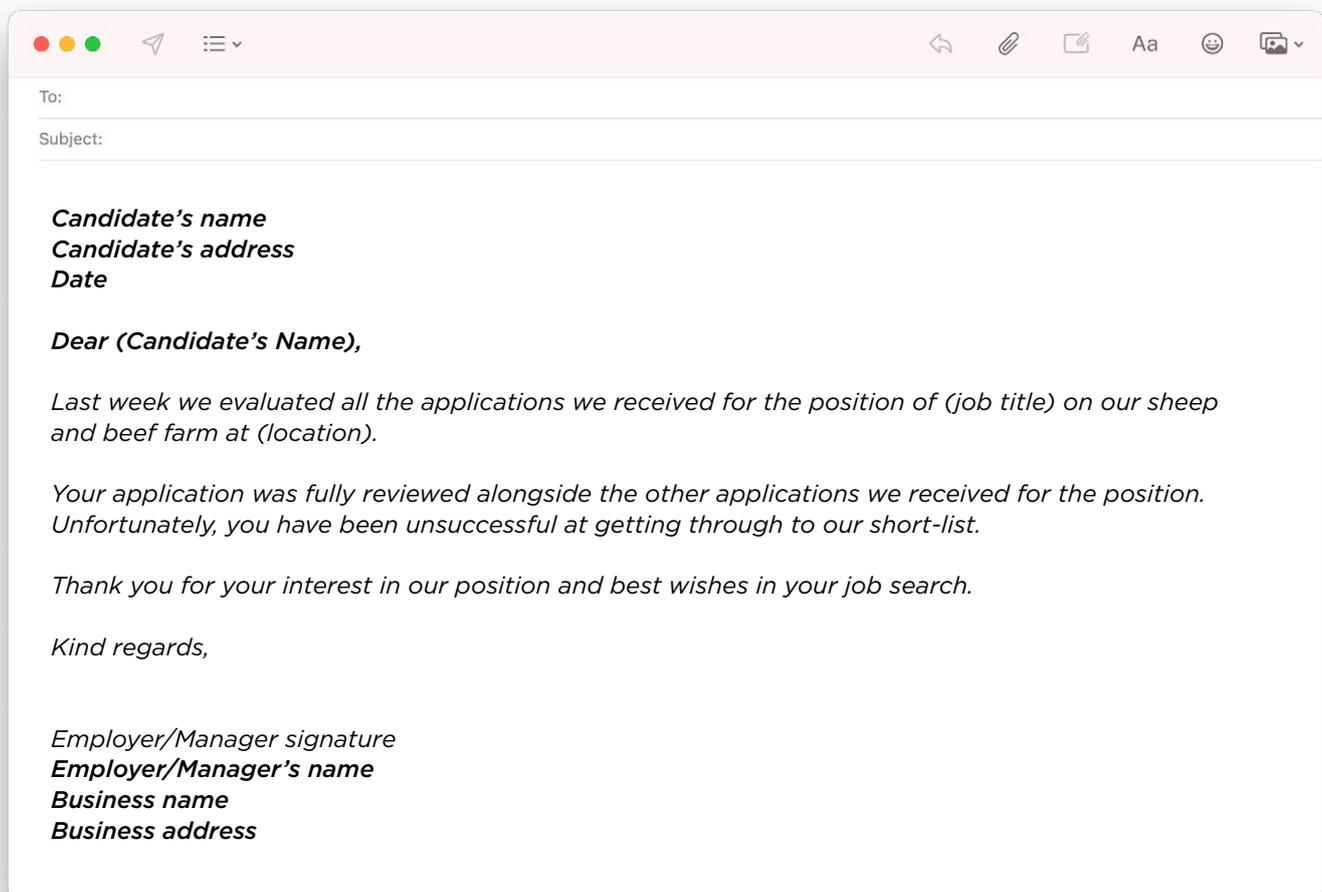
Reviewing applications through to interviewing

September 2023

Following a successful marketing and advertising campaign, the next step of the recruitment process is to start the shortlisting and applicant screening process. The aim of the screening process should be to assess the applicants against your role criteria and narrow down the list of applicants to three to five people to be interviewed.

Once a shortlist has been confirmed it is good practice to let the other applicants know they have not been shortlisted for an interview.

Example - Interview Rejection letter or email

A screenshot of an email client interface. The header shows standard window controls (red, yellow, green buttons) and navigation icons (back, forward, search, etc.). Below the header, there are fields for 'To:' and 'Subject:'. The main body of the email contains a template for an interview rejection letter. The text is as follows:

Candidate's name
Candidate's address
Date

Dear (Candidate's Name),

Last week we evaluated all the applications we received for the position of (job title) on our sheep and beef farm at (location).

Your application was fully reviewed alongside the other applications we received for the position. Unfortunately, you have been unsuccessful at getting through to our short-list.

Thank you for your interest in our position and best wishes in your job search.

Kind regards,

Employer/Manager signature
Employer/Manager's name
Business name
Business address

Screening criteria

Screening criteria are the set of competencies or measures used to grade applicants for your role. These measures should cover the most important requirements identified in the job description and person specification. If you don't have a job description, you can still list the most important tasks, skills and personal attributes for the job and rate the applicants against them to guide your thoughts and ensure a robust recruitment process. For more details on defining important attributes, see Beef + Lamb New Zealand's Factsheet 316 Describing and advertising the job'.

The screening criteria can also be weighted depending on the importance of each measure. The rating for each of the applicants can then be multiplied by the weighting to give the applicant's score for the screening criteria.

Screening should be based on the experience level and skills the applicant demonstrates through their CV and/or application form and how they match up with the screening criteria for the job. Your ratings can also be used to identify potential matters to check with referees.

Be mindful that any rating system you use is fair. Ensure you do not rate applicants against criteria that amount to unlawful discrimination under the Human Rights Act 1993.

Screening techniques

There are various screening techniques that can be used in the selection process. Ideally, you will use more than one of these approaches.

Approaches may include:

- Initial phone conversation.
- Written applications (application forms and CVs).
- Telephone interviews.
- Reference checks - with at least two relevant referees.
- Practical work tests.
- Personality/psychometric testing.
- Other pre-employment testing and checks such as drug, criminal etc.
- Structured interviews - one-on-one meeting, an interview panel, formal or informal.
- A mix of the above.

Table 1: Example screening criteria

CRITERIA	RATING (1-10)	COMMENTS
Eg Dogs	7	3 huntaways, 2 heading
Eg Chainsaw	9	Previous work in forestry gang
Eg Fencing	7	Fencing was part of previous role
Eg Tractor Work	5	Not major part of previous roles
Eg data handling	3	Hasn't done any before; not familiar
TOTAL		



Initial phone conversation

If the applicant called you initially, before applying for the role, you may have taken some notes or formed an initial impression about the person. Remember to keep a record of these on file as they might provide some information that could help you make a decision or inform you if they require further investigation.

Written applications - application forms and CVs

When assessing written applications consider the applicants skills, work history in relevant roles, key responsibilities in each role, gaps in their CV, length they have been in each role and reasons for leaving roles.

A CV or application form is only useful in selecting a shortlist. After shortlisting, the information supplied in these documents should be treated as information that needs to be validated in other ways. Consider how you will ask applicants questions to verify information in their application.

Telephone interviews or video calls

Due to the travel and logistics involved in on-farm interviews, a thorough phone interview coupled with two to three work-related reference checks provides good due diligence prior to inviting applicants to on-farm/face-to-face interviews. This approach is

becoming increasingly common in the industry and is accepted as best practice.

A good process to follow is to:

- Make a time with each applicant for an initial phone call.
- Use a phone/video interview questionnaire (B+LNZ Factsheet 322: Example Interview Questions) to find out more about applicants and their reasons for applying. Ensure all applicants are being asked the same questions. Too often this step is overlooked or done poorly - take the time to do this well to ensure only the best candidates make it through to the next stage.

Reference checks

Reference checks help to establish how an applicant has performed for a previous employer and validates the role and responsibilities that they have performed. Both written and verbal references can be falsified, so information gained should be cross referenced where possible. Ensure work history has been checked and verified - time in role, positions held, key responsibilities, reason for leaving.

Remember, under the Privacy Act, you can only contact referees nominated by the applicant.

See example reference checks - Appendix 1



On Farm /face-to-face interviews

Structured interviews require all applicants to answer the same questions and be set the same tasks. This ensures that the same information is gathered from all applicants and allows for a more objective comparison between your shortlist.

WHO

The applicants selected for a face-to-face interview should be phoned to ensure that they are still interested in the job and then offered an interview. This phone call should ideally be followed up in writing with details of the start time, place, expected activities to be carried out and the expected duration, so the applicant can plan their day. Refer to example below.

If the applicant has a partner and/or family that will be living on farm with them, you might like to invite them to the interview as well. Its a chance for them to see the workplace and home, and for you to meet them.



Example Interview Invitation



Candidate's name
Candidate's address
Date

Dear (Candidate's Name),

Thank you for your interest in the Shepherd General role at (Name) Farms. We'd like to invite you (and partner if required) to an on-farm interview to learn more about your application and the skills you would bring to the job. As discussed on the phone please find below interview details:

Time: 1pm
Date: Friday 26th August
Location: Enter address and instructions of meeting place e.g. Please meet us at the woolshed which is clearly labelled.

You will be meeting with John and Lisa Doe, Farm Owners as well as Mike Smith, Farm Manager.

There will be an interview at the woolshed then Mike will take you for a look around the farm and show you the accommodation.

We would recommend bringing a pair of work boots and a jacket for when you have a look around the property.

We look forward to meeting you.

Kind regards,

Employer/Manager signature
Employer/Manager's name
Business name
Business address

WHAT

Plan the interview process and try to use two or more people to conduct the interview, as you will each take different points from it. Make sure the roles of the interviewers are clearly defined. If applicable, the direct manager of the job applicant should be involved. The same people should do all interviews to get a consistent picture of all interviewees.

WHEN

Ideally all interviews should be carried out over a couple of days to enable a good comparison and to minimise the time between an interview and outcome.

Be realistic about the time needed for interviews and time between interviews. Consider allowing for variations to interview start and finish times and whether candidates will be able to see who else is being interviewed in crossovers. It is also likely that some applicants will be early and others late so having a half hour window is often very useful. Be mindful to remove other applicants' information and keep within your Privacy Act obligations.

WHERE

Choose a suitable location for your interview where you and the applicant can sit comfortably, and you can take notes. Be aware of environmental factors e.g. noise from the farm which may be distracting during the interview. Ensure privacy is considered when choosing a location.

Part of the interview should include a farm tour and, where possible, a viewing of the intended accommodation. Make sure that other workers on farm are aware of this, so they can be prepared as well, and ensure that the current occupants of the accommodation have been provided the required notice, if applicable.

HOW

A proposed interview format is:

1. Offer the applicant a cup of tea, coffee or water/juice. This will help everyone relax with general conversation and gives time to cover over the introductions. This can be an interesting time to pick up on how the potential employee may fit your team culture, remembering both parties will be assessing each other's suitability during this initial stage.
2. Briefly outline the interview structure - timeframes and process.
3. Explain the role and how it fits within the business structure. A brief explanation of the business is also helpful, to give the applicant an idea of the work culture and whether they would likely fit.
4. Ask the applicant for a background on them (if not covered in the phone interview).
5. Follow your structured interview questions (B+LNZ Factsheet 322) giving the applicant time to answer questions fully and allowing opportunities for them to ask questions as well.
6. Farm tour - be sure to cover off your health & safety obligations prior to undertaking a tour of the property. Be organised and show key parts of the farm, stock, yards, facilities, and accommodation. Carry out any practical work tests required (covered below).
7. Close the interview by covering over any further questions from both parties that may have arisen during the farm tour such as your expectation of start date, remuneration expectations, time off, responsibilities, training etc.
8. Inform the applicant what the process will be from this point and the timeframe of when you are aiming to provide them with an outcome. Check if they are genuinely interested in the job but be very cautious of offering them the job at this point, unless they are the only applicant or by far the best.
9. Once the applicant has left, grade them immediately so that their score is not clouded by time.





Interview tips

- During the interview, inform the applicant that you will be making notes and then follow through – don't rely on your memory alone. In making notes, distinguish between facts and your impression of the applicant. Facts about attitude and ability are far more important when deciding on the applicant than whether you like the person.
- Make judgements immediately after the interview.
- Above all, let the applicant do the talking. They have made the effort of attending the interview and need to be given the opportunity to sell themselves.
- Remember this is your one opportunity to get to know this person, so if you want to know it, and it relates to their potential to do the job – ask it!
- Cover any areas of concern raised in phone interviews or reference checks (without breaking the Privacy Act) related to experience, skills or attitude.

Practical work tests

Practical work tests require a potential employee to demonstrate their competence. This can be your opportunity to establish your applicant's health and capacity to complete tasks required e.g. walking to a vantage point and assessing fitness level, opening gates, carrying bags of feed, condition scoring stock, handpiece work, fix a broken wire, dog work, complete a feed budget.

Remember the task needs to be set at the level of the position.

Remember, you cannot legally ask candidates to come onto farm for a trial, but you can ask them during an interview process to demonstrate their ability in a specific task - providing they are fully supervised, you follow the correct health & safety procedures, and you are not benefiting financially from them doing so.

Pre-employment testing

Pre-employment verification testing (drug testing, medical checks, ACC, Credit Checks, Drivers Licence, and Criminal records etc.) can be a beneficial way to help decide on a final applicant. It is important to be fair and only carry out testing relevant to and required for the level of the role.

For more information check out the resources at B+LNZ's Employment Hub
<https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/employment-hub>

Appendix 1: Example Reference Checks

The questions below are a guide for developing questions to ask when checking an applicant's references. Please note that these are a guide only, some questions will not be applicable or appropriate.

- Can you confirm how long _____ worked for you and in what capacity? Were you happy with their work?
- Have you seen _____ current resume? Let me read what it says were his/her duties and accomplishments while in employment with you. Is this an honest account of _____ work with you? If not, please provide detail.
- What level of motivation & enthusiasm have you seen from _____? Do you see this role as being a good step for him/her?
- What do you feel are _____ strong points on the job? What characteristics do you most admire about him/her?
- Please describe _____ strengths or key attributes?
- At what level would you see _____ team of working dogs.
- What size mobs & level of terrain is _____ comfortable mustering?
- Are _____ dogs under good control, do they hunt them up or quietly do the job?
- Please describe _____ stock skills?
- Please describe _____ animal health skills?
- Please describe _____ general skills abilities (fencing - new or R & M, crutching/ dagging/ shearing, tractor work, water reticulation)
- Pasture Management, feed budgeting & setting rotations are important to this role, at what level do you see _____ skill in this area?
- Please explain any experience _____ has with pasture management?
- Please outline _____ level of computer literacy?
- What type of reporting did _____ utilise when working for you? Were you happy with the quality of reporting (accurate tallies and data)?
- H&S is a key part of farming now, did _____ follow the on-farm H&S policy?
- What involvement has _____ had with H&S?
- Would _____ be confident reviewing and updating the current on-farm H&S policy?
- Is there any area that you feel _____ will need support??
- What are _____ shortcomings? Was there anything he/she was trying to change about himself/herself, or should be trying to improve on?

- What level of responsibility did _____ have with stock management, (setting stock policies, managing the sales & purchases of stock, PICA for NAIT)?
- How would you describe _____ work ethic?
- Has _____ ever let you down in a situation requiring them to go over and above?
- How does _____ manage pressure and prioritise their day?
- How does _____ ensure they are kept up to date with compliance knowledge and industry information?
- Environmental compliance is a large part of farming now, how much involvement has _____ with this?
- Please outline any experience _____ has had with the development of a property.
- How have you found _____ at presenting new ideas? What sort of process does he/she use?
- How would you describe _____ personality/attitude?
- How does _____ interact within the team?
- How well does _____ relate to other people? Which employees does he/she work best with, supervisors/peers/subordinates?
- Is he/she a team player?
- How would you describe _____ communication skills? Are they confident having a conversation, discussing issues?
- How would you describe _____ pride in their work and personal presentation?
- Were you happy with the way they kept their house and surrounds?
- Having a good work life balance is important, what does _____ (and their family) enjoy doing outside of work?
- How does _____ manage extra-curricular activities during the busy times of the season?
- Was _____ ever formally disciplined during their employment?
- Would you employ _____ again?

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