



Systems & Policies

“System and Policies” covers the importance of manuals and policies in the work place. It guides farmers through developing their own manuals and policies to ensure their businesses best work is carried out.

What to expect:

- What makes a successful manual
- Types of manuals
 - Operations
 - Farm policies
- The human side of manuals
- Policy and operation manuals examples

3.2 System Manuals

Using manuals to ensure things are done the correct way

Why this is important

Often knowledge is found only in the heads of people who perform jobs. Writing things down is a way to make sure that all people on the farm have the ability to know how to do a job – even if it is not normally part of their workload.

As farms have become larger and more complex, the ‘boss’ can no longer be there to watch everything and give knowledge on how the job is supposed to be carried out. To minimise mistakes and help employees it is important that systems and processes are identified and recorded.

Many farm businesses have undertaken this challenge by compiling a farm manual.

Manuals have value in that they:

- Ensure that new workers learn how things are done on a particular farm
- Ensure that tasks are completed consistently
- Ensure new employees understand farm policy
- Help new employees become fully operational more quickly
- How an insurance policy against disaster if a key worker on a property becomes unable to do their job through illness or accident. They assist another person to walk onto the farm and keep it going smoothly.

Manuals can be an important tool for successful business growth because they make things easier when the manager is not able to watch over the daily operations of the business.

This fact sheet will cover:

- What makes a successful manual?
- Types of manuals
 - Operations
 - Farm policies
- The human side of manuals
- Policy and operations manuals examples

What makes a successful manual?

A successful manual is:

- Simple and easy to use
- Short enough so that it does get read and used
- Has a good index so it is easy to find the required information
- A living document that is reviewed regularly so it is accurate and relevant to current practices on the farm.

Types of manuals

Manuals on farm can be developed and used in a variety of ways. Separate manuals that cover operational information and policy information is one way, or you can combine both. When developing your farm manuals, it is best to assess your business and your team structure and decide which would best meet your needs. However, it is important to remember the key attributes of a successful manual (listed previously) to make sure the manual will be a functional part of your farm system, not just another door stop!

We have identified two main types of manuals that may be useful, and ideas for what can be included in each manual are listed below.

Operations manuals

Operations manuals are developed to become part of the communication between employer and employee and all team members, in an effort to keep the processes and procedures carried out on farm running smoothly and to ensure that everyone is up to speed with how to carry out operational tasks. They usually include step-by-step instructions on how to do the task.

Developing an operations manual should not be an onerous task. Keep the information in manuals simple and clear, in plain language that everyone will understand, and if possible include photographs or pictures of various stages.

If the information is technical in nature, base the details in the operations manual on the original instructions from the manufacturer.

The following is a list of ideas of things that can be put into operations manuals:

- Tractor operation
- Motorbike operation
- Operation of other farm machinery (e.g. fertiliser/seed/spreader etc)
- Procedures for shearing, docking, drenching etc.
- Electric fence unit operation
- Farm water supply maintenance
- Record keeping guideline
- Animal health and welfare procedures
- They may also include information such as:
 - Farm goals
 - Reporting lines
 - Other farm information such as important phone numbers (for example the vet, fertiliser spreaders and the livestock transport operator)
 - Farm location details e.g. GPS coordinates (see Health and Safety Fact Sheet).
 - Maintenance recording.
 - Farm map.

Maintenance recording

A maintenance manual can be part of an operations manual or can be referred to in the operations manual. Generally, a maintenance manual has a list of regular maintenance tasks that need to be done, with a schedule beside the tasks of when they need to be done. People tick off the

maintenance task as they are completed. It can be valuable to have an employee sign their name beside the completed maintenance schedule, as this can ensure greater accountability. Maintenance systems will include a plan for ensuring the work that is identified gets done (see Maintenance Schedule Example and Template 3.2.3 & 3.2.4).

Farm policy manuals

A farm policy manual outlines the farming system and philosophies that are used on a property and are a statement of expectations for behaviour within the farm business team.

Farm policy manuals can cover a wide range of topics or areas. Many of the policies included will relate directly to the implementation of processes on farm such as:

- Feeding policies (including feed monitoring and supplementation, regrassing)
- Weed management
- Fertiliser use
- Stock recording
- Mating policy
- Animal health and welfare.

It is also important to include a number of people-based policies that will have a direct impact on the work environment you provide and the behaviour of those in the team. These include policies such as:

- Code of conduct
- Training
- Personal information policy (outlines the policy on the use and storage of personal information)
- Personal grievances and disputes policy
- Health and Safety
- Leave entitlements
- Support policies
- Sexual harassment
- Cleanliness and hygiene (both on farm and in living quarters)
- Drug and alcohol use policies.

Refer to Policy Manual Example 3.2.5 for ideas on how to target the information.

Developing manuals

Keep the following points in mind when developing your manuals:

- Manuals should be easy to understand
- Involve staff in the development
- Break the development down into manageable sections

- Make them a living document - keep them updated
- Use them as part of your orientation and training processes
- Add photographs and pictures where applicable
- Don't over complicate things
- Keep language simple
- Length does matter – keep it relevant but watch that they are not too long
- Make at least two copies of the manual so that it can be moved around among employees and locations
- Use clear files to insert A4 sheets. This makes it easier to add or discard material. It also offers protection from grubby hands
- Laminate them if you use them frequently
- Keep them in a place everyone has access to.

The human side of manuals

People will still need to be trained effectively when there is a manual system in place. However, a manual will offer staff added support that they can refer to from the moment they are working on their own.

People like to be able to perform a task correctly the first time. Manuals can empower people to achieve better standards and outcomes by describing the steps of a task, without going through the process of learning by trial and error. This is very motivating for employees.

Knowledge sharing

Good leadership in a business will create an environment of shared knowledge where people are strengthened in their work performance through a culture of trust and cooperation.

Reluctance to share knowledge on the part of a competent and knowledgeable worker can be a relatively common thing. Some people do not want to share their knowledge because they feel that if they are the only person who can do the work effectively then they have job security and a sense of importance. Sharing knowledge means that the person who had the knowledge is no longer indispensable, and therefore they may feel that they are of less value to the organisation.

People may also simply forget to share knowledge with people around them, or find it is easier to do the work themselves than make the effort to share the knowledge with another person. For these reasons it is the responsibility of managers and leaders in a business to ensure that good instructions are available to people so they can work effectively. Carrying out tasks correctly means that staff have more confidence, remain motivated and positive, and efficiency is increased.

People and paperwork

Remember that a good manual is simple and functional. It must be organised so that the paperwork is easy to follow and clearly systemised. The efficiency benefits gained from such a manual system outweigh the effort of creating the system.

Benefits to the employer

Writing things down will ensure that your day-to-day business operations could continue without you were you to become sick or unavailable. Writing things down can help you relax when you are away from your business.

Manuals can help an employer pass on the daily operational jobs, and allow them to spend more time in the strategic part of their business.

Once an easy-to-follow list has been created stating what to do and how to do it, it becomes easier to hire someone else to do it and free yourself for the higher level tasks.

Other benefits include:

- Confident staff who consistently do their work correctly
- Consistency in staff training
- Increased efficiency
- Increased staff motivation
- Greater accountability of staff.

What do I do next?

- Make a list of tasks that would benefit from being documented on the property
- Ask staff what things would be most useful to them if they were documented
- You may choose to follow the example that is provided to document farm operations and policies
- Try starting with documenting the lambing process.

Useful references

There are rural professionals who have pre-packaged policy and operations manuals available for your replication.

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3.2.1 Example – Operations Manual

Bob and Janet Farmer Spray Dip



Contents

1. Setting up the race
3. Mixing dip
4. Starting
6. Dipping
9. Clean up

Spray Race Sheep Dip Operation

1. The portable spray race is stored on a trailer in the shed beside the front woolshed.
2. Ensure that:
 - you have help to take it off the trailer
 - you take enough fuel for the pump
 - the hoses are straight and untangled
 - the spray race is correctly positioned and fixed in raceway.
3. Read the agrichemical container carefully, and place the correct amount of spray (dosage) into a full drum of water (on the trailer). Stir it well using the mixing paddle. Check with your Manager before adding the chemical, if you're not sure about the dosage.
4. Adjust the taps to full on position.
5. Start pump engine.
6. Run sheep through.

N.B. check after the first few have been through that the dip is reaching the skin. If not, adjust the nozzles on the race as per instruction manual (plastic box on the trailer).
7. Top up water and chemical as required.
8. Complete dipping.
9. Turn off pump, disconnect hoses, dispose of unused solution appropriately (see disposal instruction on pack).
10. Return spray race to the trailer, return trailer to the shed beside the front woolshed.

3.2.2 Example – Maintenance Schedule

Weekly Tasks	Week Starting:		Week Starting:		Week Starting:		Week Starting:		Week Starting:		
	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	
Lubricate motorbike chains											
Check motorbike oil levels											
Check tractor fluid levels											
Monthly Tasks	Date	Signed	Monthly Tasks					Date	Signed		
Check electric fence earth			Clean fridge in units								
Grease water pumps			Grease tractors								
			Clean motorbike air filters								

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3.2.3 Template – Maintenance Schedule

Weekly Tasks	Week Starting:		Week Starting:		Week Starting:		Week Starting:		Week Starting:	
	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed
Monthly Tasks	Monthly Tasks		Monthly Tasks		Monthly Tasks		Monthly Tasks		Monthly Tasks	
	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed	Date	Signed

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3.2.4 Example – Farm Policy Manual

Farm name: Ngauruhoe Farms

Property description

This farming operation utilises the following assets to operate the farming business:

- 160 ha of flat river terraces, free draining plus 585 ha medium to steep hill
- Land is subdivided into 90 paddocks and water reticulated to all the flats and 50% of hill paddocks. The rest of the farm is well supplied by natural water.
- The farm has a modern 5 stand, raised board woolshed, located at the front of the farm and an older 3 stand woolshed located at the back.
- Currently winters 10,000 su.

Farm goals

The primary goals of the farming business are:

- To achieve 300 kg meat and fibre production per hectare
- To control the cost of production to achieve a system that is profitable and sustainable
- To minimise the amount of human work required to achieve the production and the profit through allowing stock to harvest feed and only making supplements where pasture quality is being seriously compromised
- To allow flexibility for the farm owners to take time away from the farm as needed to meet family obligations and lifestyle goals.

Feeding policy

The farm operates on a policy of maximising grass growth and harvesting feed grown. To achieve this the following happens:

Spring

- Set stock ewes 2 weeks before lambing
- Breeding cows calved on flats behind a wire
- Nitrogen applied as required as per feed and nutrient budgets
- Crop sown for growing out replacement ewe lambs
- Bulls/steers bought in as required.

Summer

- Terminal lambs sold store or to the works at weaning prior to Christmas
- Replacement ewe lambs on crop at weaning mid-January
- Ewes enter summer rotation
- Lighter ewes drafted off and preferentially fed prior to tupping
- Cattle sold as required as per feed budget
- Rotations slowed, hoggets come off crop and enter rotation.

Winter

- Winter rotation as per plan
- Feed budgets done fortnightly
- Nitrogen applied as required as per feed and nutrient budgets
- No supplement is purchased.

Culling policy

Culls are identified in the following manner:

Cattle

- Cows are pregnancy tested six weeks after bull removal
- Empty cows are sold as soon as possible after identification.

Sheep

- All ewes uddered at docking and drys culled
- Ewes scanned 10– 12 weeks (70– 90 days) after rams removed
- Empty ewes sold as soon as possible after identification.

Weed policy

The weed policy is designed to integrate weed control with other jobs to minimise time requirements.

- Weeds are sprayed with a motorbike mounted sprayer where possible/safe to do so e.g. banks along tracks
- Aerial spraying performed as required
- Weeds are sprayed with appropriate chemicals
- Gloves, goggles, gumboots and overalls are to be worn when mixing and spraying.

Fertiliser policy

The fertiliser programme is designed on the following:

- Maintenance fertiliser
- Soil tests are done annually and fertiliser requirements are derived from these results
- Recommendations are taken from two companies
- The aim is to achieve a least cost mixture while ensuring all nutrients requirements are met
- Copper, Cobalt and Selenium are added where pasture tests indicate the need
- Other trace elements are supplied direct to stock.

Nitrogen fertiliser

- Nitrogen is applied as required as per feed and nutrient budget to match pasture growth to feed demand
- Rates are variable depending on season
- Timing is variable depending on season however normally 2 applications are made – July and September. Nitrogen is flown on by helicopter when the airstrip is too wet to use.

Stock recording policy

- All rams are harnessed during the mating period
- Shepherding and recording of lambs/ewes only performed on the stud flock
- Records of docking and weaning tallies to be kept.

Mating policy

Mating is managed in the following way:

- Thin ewes (under condition score 2) identified at weaning for preferential feeding
- Hoggets mated at a minimum of 40kg liveweight
- Rams out 1 April
- Rams removed 42 days later (7 weeks)
- Crayons changed fortnightly
- Bulls out 1 January
- Bulls removed 56 days later (8 weeks)
- Bulls rotated fortnightly.

Animal health policy

This animal health policy has been designed with an emphasis on prevention and avoiding animal suffering.

- Identify causes of lameness or ill health and fix where possible
- Sick animals to be grazed close to yards with access to water and full allowances of feed whenever practical
- In all cases primary assistance is administered by farmers. Vets are used when the outlook is positive and profitable. Where the likelihood of recovery is poor animals will be destroyed rather than prolong suffering.

Treatments to be administered by farm staff include:

- Internal/external parasite drenches/treatments
- 5 in 1 vaccine
- Toxoplasmosis vaccine
- Campylobacter vaccine
- Androvax as required
- Antibiotics
- Facial Eczema prevention treatments (Zinc).

Smoking and drug policies

- No smoking is permitted in the farm woolshed, in other buildings or around fuel supplies on farm. Smoking is permitted in open areas of the farm.
- No alcohol is to be consumed during work time. Any staff member suspected to be under the influence of alcohol will be asked to leave the property and will be disciplined according to the disciplinary process outlined in their employment contract / disciplinary policy.
- No illicit drugs are permitted on the property at any time. This will be a reason for instant dismissal. Any staff member suspected to be under the influence of drugs will be asked to leave the property and will be disciplined according to the disciplinary process outlined in their employment contract / disciplinary policy.

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