



Team Building

Explores the importance and the benefits of having an effective team

- What is an effective team
- Building team spirit
- Effective team meetings

4.2 Effective Teams

Why this is important

An effective team is an integral part of a well-functioning farm. The benefits of having an effective team include:

- Improved employee satisfaction
- Increased motivation
- A positive and enjoyable working environment
- Open lines of communication
- Improved workplace productivity
- Increased staff morale
- Making the best use of people's time and skills
- A safe entity for people to share ideas
- Lower absenteeism
- Lower staff turnover or higher retention of staff.

This fact sheet will cover:

- What is an effective team?
- Building team spirit
- Maintaining effective teams
- Effective team meetings
- Regularity of team meetings

What is an effective team?

A team is defined as a group of people who work together to achieve a common goal and objectives. Developing and managing an effective team involves understanding the people that make up the team and working to build on each person's strengths. An effective team has free communication and makes a member feel safe to contribute. They have a strong team culture and foster a sense of belonging for the members. Each member is happy to contribute and will have a sense of ownership for their role and the business as a whole.

Building team spirit

In effective, productive teams members feel that they are valued in what they do, they have a strong sense of team spirit and feel involved in and committed to the objectives and goals of the team. A strong team spirit is a key part of retention. The following is a list of ideas for how to build team spirit:

- Share business goals – both strategic and operational. People who know what they are aiming for and understand why they are doing things have a stronger sense of ownership
- Celebrate success
- Give credit where credit is due

- Be clear on expectations and processes
- Communicate – verbally, in writing (through use of whiteboards, diaries or notebooks at the woolshed)
- Follow through on promises and threats consequences
- Build respect and be respectful
- Involve all team members in decision making
- Promote involvement in making decisions and showing initiative
- Delegate responsibility not chores
- Acknowledge effort even if there hasn't been a success
- Trust your team
- Build a sense of pride in their role, their contribution and the business they are part of
- Celebrate milestones amongst the team – include everything from qualifications gained and new skills mastered through to simple things like people's birthdays
- Be human!

Effective team meetings

Team meetings allow information to be shared efficiently. Everyone present hears the same message (reducing the Chinese whispers effect) and can contribute to decisions made. Team meetings should involve everyone and be communicated as an important part of keeping a team working and allowing contribution from all members. Meetings are a time for sharing knowledge and ideas, reporting, planning, problem-solving and open and safe communication between the team. It's a good time to celebrate success but not the appropriate forum to address performance issues.

It is important to consider the need for a team meeting. Team meetings should not just be held out of habit. Meetings do not need to be long and boring. Use the following hints to make sure your meeting is a success:

- Prepare - have an agenda. Consider a set agenda that gives everyone the opportunity to prepare and contribute
- Think about the location – make sure it is comfortable for everyone and that you can access other information (records etc) if you need to
- Schedule the meeting in as part of the weekly (or monthly) task list – prioritise the meetings and make it clear that everyone is to be present
- Make sure people know when and where they need to be
- Start on time
- Take notes – particularly if allocating responsibility or accountability
- Remember meetings should result in actions, not just be a talkfest
- Circulate minutes
- Make sure only one person speaks at a time
- Everyone is responsible for how the meeting runs – it may be useful to rotate the responsibility of running the meeting so everyone feels involved and gains experience.
- Respect each other's contributions

- Finish on time and don't apologise if you finish early!
- Set rules as a group – they can include things like silence is taken as agreement, address problems not people, focus on what can be done – not what can't, not texting during the meeting, or outline a process for how people are to present their ideas and how the group will decide on things.

Regularity of team meetings

Team meetings can be called when issues arise or they can be scheduled in as part of the team roster. Whichever format you choose, make sure all team members are aware of the process for adding items to the agenda. If meetings are held monthly it is useful to have some set agenda items such as health and safety issues, upcoming activities, or progress reporting on farm goals.

Meetings should be scheduled as often as is needed to monitor the progress being made toward farm goals. As you set the next meeting, consider the time that will be needed for team members to complete assigned tasks and schedule accordingly.

Set agendas

The following is a list of topics you may like to include on a set agenda for team meetings:

- Good news stories
- Training undertaken and/or planned
- Major areas of work coming up on the farm (e.g. supplementary feed making, drying off)
- Time off and leave allocations
- Health and Safety issues
- Budgets – planned vs. actual
- Targets for the coming period
- How we are tracking for the long term targets on farm.

What do I do next?

- Think about whether developing a more formal process for team meetings would suit your team - if so set up the team meetings process
- Incorporate ways to increase team spirit into your workplace
- Talk to your staff and discuss opportunities to involve them in more decision making
- Communicate!
- Read through the Retention Strategies 5.1 and Understanding People 6.3 Fact Sheets for more tips on working with your team.

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