

The Role of Farm Supervisors of Multiple Dairy Farms

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Abstract

Growth in the size of herds, multiple farm ownership and 'distance' of owners from farms has given rise to the role of multiple-farm supervisor.

This report examines what supervisors do and what they offer their employers.

Supervisors spend a lot of time planning, implementing and adjusting plans and budgets, working closely with farm managers to ensure owners' goals are achieved. These supervisors offer their owners the skills of a superb manager, along with intangible factors (e.g. focus, confidence) that augment the application of those skills across large scale multiple farm businesses. They have the opportunity to spread their experience over multiple profit centres and to grow farm manager ability and even intuition. The role has scope, then, to impact on the business's profit, smooth running and reputation.

Technological or personnel support for supervisors that frees up their time from the mundane; personal development as needed (e.g. governance, human resources); relational support (e.g. network, mentoring); and communication and strategies from the business owner that help convey the value of the person in this supervisory role will all be investments that benefit the business and the industry.

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Introduction

The New Zealand dairy industry has seen significant growth in the sizes of herds along with the number of multiple farm operations; this has led to various forms of specialization in the farm business, including the evolution of a tier between governance and management – variously called supervisor, operations manager or general manager.

There is very little in the literature specifically about this supervisory layer in dairy farm businesses. (Appendix 1 contains a Literature Review.)

Personal experience says that the ‘shape’ this role takes is varied; influences such as existence/size of investment in the business, the form of management employed on the individual farms and both size and structure of the business all play a part in forming the position.

It is self-evident that the role is necessary, even vital, given the number of farms, the sizes of the herds, the geography involved and sometimes the absence of a ‘present’ owner in the businesses using supervisors. These businesses are often still growing and want to ensure that managerial ability keeps pace, so *all* the benefits of that growth are realised.

In so many ways this is a ‘still developing’ job.

The aim of this project was to understand the common themes of just what multiple farm supervisors offer the businesses they serve, and, in doing so, what tasks they are engaged in on

This report describes the survey undertaken, gives summaries and pertinent examples of what the supervisors reported via their answers and discusses the key points as themes that arise. In concluding, an assessment is made of ways to get even better value from this role.

Method

Following a series of DairyNZ interviews with large herd farmers in the Bay of Plenty/Central Plateau area, and through the course of general work as a Consulting Officer with DairyNZ, there had been contact with several people working as multiple farm supervisors (the term “supervisor” will be used throughout the report, despite there being a range of titles in practice). This, combined with the author’s own brief experience supervising 3 farms, the DairyNZ large herd interviews had highlighted some questions about just what role Farm Supervisors are expected to fulfil.

DairyNZ Regional Leaders throughout New Zealand were approached asking for details of people supervising multiple dairy farms. The resultant contacts were approached to participate in a survey to identify just what tasks they performed, what they provide to the business that they work for and, from there, to establish the common factors.

A total of 50 names were collated, not all of whom were able to be contacted. Confidentiality was assured to potential contributors; this has been achieved by only reporting responses as either aggregate answers and in the survey results to identify participants with a unique number known only to the author. Four people declined to participate for a variety of reasons, and some simply didn’t return the survey. A total of 30 usable surveys were completed.

Participants were offered the choice of returning the completed survey (either electronically or

by mail), or to be interviewed by phone for their responses after they had read over the questions. Ten and a half of the surveys were completed over the phone.

Survey

Questions asked in the survey were as follows:

1. What are your key areas of responsibility?
2. What time is allocated to various tasks (now compared to what had been expected)?*
3. What are the primary causes of any discrepancy above?
4. What performance measures does your job have?
5. How do you/your activities strengthen the farm business in which you work?
6. If you were employing a replacement for yourself, what skills or experience would you look for?
7. What would you change about your current role (if you could just snap your fingers)?
8. What tools/support/further training would make your job easier/more effective/more satisfying?
9. Who in the business plans and implements a response to significant outside changes (e.g. reduced inductions)?

* Question 2 included a pre-populated table of tasks to be ranked in order from the most time spent to the least. Tasks listed in the survey are shown in Table 1.

There was provision to add 'other' tasks. The table in the survey also invited participants to rank tasks in order of what they had expected before they took on the role. All other questions

simply had space for the participants own responses. Background information about the participants and the physical scope of their position was collected in the final section.

The full survey, along with its preamble, as was sent to participants, is included in Appendix 2.

Table 1: *Tasks Listed in Survey for Supervisors to Rank in Order of Time Spent on Each One*

SURVEY DESCRIPTION OF TASK	SHORT NAME FOR REPORT
Meeting with owner/board	Owner Meetings
Assisting Managers with Staff related issues	FM Staff Assist
Assisting Managers with daily management/farm tasks	FM Assist
Allocating resources between units (e.g. stock)	Resource Allocation
Completing paperwork, meeting compliance	Paperwork/Compliance
Setting/Reviewing budgets	Budgets
Planning	Planning
Monitoring Management Calendar Tasks	Management Calendar
Training	Training
Crisis Management	Crisis Management
'PR' or meetings with externals (eg Regional Council, irrigation groups, suppliers etc)	External Meetings
Own Training or Personal Development	PD

Results

1. Background Information

The position of multiple farm supervisor takes many forms. This supervisor may work full-time as an employee of the business, may be a contracted farm consultant, or may add a part-time facet to their pre-existing senior manager or sharemilker relationship with the business.

Further, some of the people filling this role were part owners, either as a family member, in the case of the "family farming corporate" (Allen, 2005), or as a shareholder.

Some supervisors answer to one owner, some to a board and some to several; some of the larger businesses include extra personnel such as a general manager, business manager, accountant and/or office manager. Finally, a couple of the largest organisations included multiple supervisors.

The least number of farms supervised by the surveyed respondents was 1 farm (this person had previously had 2 dairy farms and 1 support block under their care, so was able to answer with reference to the multiple farms). The greatest number of farms was 29, where these were all operated by 50/50 sharemilkers.

On average each participant had 9 farms under their care, with a total of 7,200 cows. This makes the average herd size 800 cows, so this cohort of supervisors are not just dealing with multiple farms, but with large scale dairy farms as well. In the LIC Dairy Statistics (L.I.C., 2011) 8% of all herds are 800 cows or larger. Eleven supervisors (35%) are working with an average herd size of 1000 cows or more; only 4% of NZ dairy herds fit into this size range (L.I.C., 2011).

Of the surveys returned, 16 are based in the North Island, 1 was mixed and only 13 (43%) were in the South Island. Of all the supervisors in the initial database, 53% are in the South Island.

Supervisors work with a complete range of farm staff: Farm Managers, Contract Milkers, Lower Order Sharemilkers, 50/50 Sharemilkers (referred to generically as FMs for the remainder of the report) and all the people answering to them.

2. Key Areas of Responsibility

Nine respondents listed “be the owner’s representative” or similar as being among their responsibilities; one supervisor put his succinctly as “acting as absentee owner / overseeing

operations of the farms / budgets, monitoring (financial and production).” Some of these recognize their ‘owner’ as a board or “the shareholders”. Being the single point of contact, or liaison, between the owner and FMs was specifically mentioned as part of this.

Other key areas listed were:

- Achieve financial goals / achieve specified results / ensure teams meet goals / take responsibility for outcomes;
- Implement the business plan / ensure actions meet plans;
- Get best return on asset / protect/maintain asset / improve asset value/capacity;
- Manage/oversee/monitor budgets;
- Support/make successful/mentor/lead/coach/train the FMs;
- Supervise/manage/challenge/“hold to account”/monitor the FMs;
- Control costs / obtain supplies / capture economies of scale;
- Extract synergies;
- Manage compliance;
- Be the back stop / take up slack.

One supervisor described their areas of responsibility thus:

Manage the business on behalf of the shareholders to achieve the specified results; managing the financial, physical and personnel aspects of the business.

Some supervisors’ roles have a larger element of strategy in them – these people would be senior supervisors or ‘general managers’. Apart from the key areas detailed above, these people said they have responsibility for:

- Strategic direction;
- Developing the five year plan;
- Seeking new opportunities.

Table 2: Tasks Independently Suggested by Supervisors

NEW TASKS RETAINED SEPARATELY	Mention Frequency	NEW TASKS INCORPORATED	Mention Frequency
Manager/Staff Recruitment/Share Milker Contracts	2	Management Meetings with CEO & other Supervisors (included with Meeting with Owner)	1
Setting Policy and Procedures	1	Strategic Planning (included with Planning)	1
Authorising Expenditure/Managing accounts	2	Meeting with Banks/Lawyers/Accountants (included with PR/External Meetings)	1
Capturing & managing data for monitoring/reporting requirements	5	Reporting (included with Capturing and Monitoring Data)	2
Inspecting Farms to ensure on track	3	OSH (included with Paperwork/Compliance)	1
Innovation Exploring	1		
Looking for Next Opportunities	1		
Coaching Team	1		
Overseeing R & M/Development	2		
Procurement & Sale of Stock	1		
Travel	2		

Twelve tasks were offered for Supervisors to rank (Table 1); verbal feedback said these tasks represented fairly well the range undertaken on a regular basis. However, a variety of ‘other’ tasks were fed back from some respondents, as listed in Table 2.

Tasks listed in the left hand column of Table 2 were put in the ranking exercise, by virtue of either their uniqueness compared to the tasks already included in the survey (Table 1) or of the number of individual supervisors who mentioned this task.

Tasks listed in the right hand column of Table 2 were amalgamated into similar task items.

An initial estimation of the ‘average’ ranking was unable to cope with the inclusion of the additional tasks suggested by only a few supervisors. The scope of this report doesn’t allow for

the development and inclusion of thorough statistical methods. A future survey with better task definition, a larger number of options and no provision for “other” could be undertaken.

For this report, a weighted average (as calculated by counting how many times each task was ranked 1st, how many times it ranked 2nd or 3rd and how many times it was 4th or 5th) was calculated. The results of the weighted ranking of tasks are shown in Table 3.

The five tasks the aggregated supervisor group spends their most time on, and the equivalent hours per week in a 60 hour week (approximately), are:

- Planning – 8 hours
- Assisting FMs with daily management/farm tasks – 7 hours
- Setting/Reviewing budgets – 7 hours
- Completing paperwork, meeting compliance – 6:30 hours
- Monitoring Management Calendar Tasks – 4:40 hours

These five tasks would thus account for over half of the time available in a representative week.

Another 8:30 hours are tied up with Allocating Resources and Meeting Owner, and a further 7hr 15min with either FM Staff Assist or Training.

Interestingly, Assisting FMs with Daily Management/Farm Tasks finished with the same weighted ranking as Setting/Reviewing Budgets, with both appearing in the top five tasks the same number of times; however, the former had double the number of first rankings compared to the budget related task. Several supervisors were at pains to point out that the assistance they give is not always by doing the job with the FM, but may be by talking through the FMs decision process either over the phone or face to face.

Table 3: Weighted Ranking of Time Spent on Supervisors' Tasks

TASK	Times Ranked No. 1	Times Ranked No. 2 or 3	Times Ranked No. 4 or 5	Weighted Value ¹	Final Rank	Equivalent Time ² (hr: min)
Planning	7	11	5	1780	1	8:05
Assisting Managers with daily management/farm tasks	8	7	4	1520	2	6:54
Setting/Reviewing budgets	4	13	2	1520	2	6:54
Completing paperwork, meeting compliance	5	9	5	1420	4	6:27
Monitoring Management Calendar Tasks	3	7	4	1020	5	4:38
Allocating resources between units (e.g. stock)	0	7	10	960	6	4:21
Meeting with owner/board	3	5	5	900	7	4:05
Assisting Managers with Staff related issues	1	7	4	820	8	3:43
Training	3	4	4	780	9	3:32
Other: <i>Capturing and managing data for monitoring/reporting requirements</i>	4	2	0	560	10	2:32
'PR' or meetings with external people (eg Regional Council, irrigation groups, suppliers)	1	4	3	540	11	2:27
Crisis Management	0	4	4	480	12	2:10
Other: <i>Inspecting Farms to ensure on track</i>	3	0	0	300	13	1:21
Own Training or Personal Development	0	2	0	160	14	0:43
Other: <i>Manager/Staff Recruitment/SM Contracts</i>	0	1	0	80	15	0:21
Other: <i>Travel</i>	0	1	0	80	15	0:21
Other: <i>Looking for Next Opportunities</i>	0	1	0	80	15	0:21
Other: <i>Coaching Team</i>	0	1	0	80	15	0:21
Other: <i>Authorising Expenditure/Managing accounts</i>	0	1	0	80	15	0:21
Other: <i>Overseeing R & M/Development</i>	0	0	1	40	20	0:10

Notes:

¹**Weighted Value:** Ranked 1st, valued at 100 points per occurrence; Ranked 2 - 3, valued at 80 points per occurrence; Ranked 4 -5, valued at 40 points per occurrence

²**Equivalent Time:** Assuming an average of 60 hours per week, this is the weighted ranking converted into hours per week.

3. Deviation from Expectation of Tasks

Of the surveys completed only about half of the supervisors filled in what their expected ranking of tasks had been when they came into the role. Reasons given for not providing this information were usually where the supervisor's role had evolved significantly over time – either as the business had grown and the 'size' or nature of the job had thus changed, or where other business circumstances had changed (e.g. death of an owner). Some supervisors said they had had a large influence on shaping their role so it was very much as they expected.

Of those supervisors who did comment on how they spent their time in reality, compared to a different "pre-job" expectation, the significant points include:

- Planning and Setting/Reviewing Budgets retained their ranking of first and second in both cases (though Budgets had been placed second *equal* in the "Actual" ranking);
- Assisting FMs with Daily Management/Farm Tasks had increased in time spent from an expected rank of 4th to that of 2nd equal;
- Time spent Training had dropped in rank from an expected 6th to 8th;
- More time is spent meeting with Owner/Board than expected;
- Less time is spent on Crisis Management than had been expected;
- Capturing and Managing Data/Reporting had increased in time spent, ranking an "Actual" 10th compared to a 12th equal "Expected".

4. Reasons for Deviation from Expectation of Tasks

A number of causes (and often more than one) were given for why a discrepancy existed between supervisors' expectations and what they actually found themselves spending their time on.

Poor time management or the presence of reactivity was noted by eight supervisors (27%).

Four of the supervisors spoke of their own (false?) expectations prior to taking the role causing the difference in task time allocation. The time spent on monitoring and reporting was cited by four supervisors. There were four mentions of people/staff and three of compliance. Weather challenges were cited by two, as were the consequences of the financial crash.

One person had expected to operate at what I would call a 'higher level' with Planning, Budgets, and Owner Meetings listed as his expected top 3; his reality is that his number one ranked task is FM Assist.

Contrasting this, a second supervisor gave a lot of detail in explaining this discrepancy. They had expected to spend 40% of their time on Management Calendar. While they find it still takes the largest chunk of their time, it has dropped to only 20%, now being equal to Capturing and Managing Data (for monitoring/reporting); planning is taking *more* time than expected. Their full commentary is as follows:

- Thought role could be more hands on;
- Size of business requires more planning and monitoring than I thought;
- Intensity of management the business expects/needs is higher than expected;
- Reallocation of time to current perception of best mix;
- Didn't anticipate time in office needed to check integrity of info collected for accuracy of reporting that business required; and
- The business itself did not understand and therefore clarify at time of job offer the time these things took.

This 'time-hungriness' of capturing, managing and reporting data also came up strongly from a supervisor in another business.

5. Performance Measures

26 supervisors reported that their performance targets included some representation of financial or production success. Such measures included:

- Return on Capital
- Profit (EBIT)
- Achievement of financial budget – cash results
- Business growth – assets improved
- Achievement of budgeted production at budgeted cost structure – cost of production
- Achievement of production targets - annual and 10 day MS Production

While many supervisors talked about performance measures, these were not always formal; in this case they described their own indicators of success. An example of this is:

Exceeding production results, profit is above budget, resources are appropriately allocated so they're not wasted. Staff are encouraged and engaged to achieve and 'own' results. Compliance is maintained, assets improved.

There was uncertainty of performance measures where a consultant is contracted to act as supervisor – 75% of these people (though from a small sample!) reported that they had no written performance targets; evidence of success was “still being engaged to provide services.” On the other hand, one of the consultants in this role did list their own measures of success as, “Return on assets, both through appreciation and cash returns, and seeing staff achieve their goals.”

Nine supervisors listed staff related performance measures such as staff turnover, achieving Investors in People standards, staff development and progression.

The farm physical measures specifically discussed included farm appearance and standard of R and M; where performance *was* described as being referenced against targets in the job description, physical measures were included then.

One supervisor mentioned no negative publicity as one of their indicators of success.

An example of the existence of a comprehensive list of performance measures is:

We have aligned performance targets for all parts of the operation, as well as individual performance criteria. These are reviewed at least twice during the year, with an end of year review to determine final outcome.

6. *How Supervisors Strengthen the Farm Business*

Many supervisors described ways that they strengthen the business that relate directly to the areas of responsibility already detailed. These included such comments as:

- Help grow people and the business
- Assessing functionality of gear/processes in achieving targets
- Focus on financial results not just production
- Follow up on all agreed plans with FMs and ensure implementation
- Monitoring and benchmarking.

These are large scale, multiple farm businesses, with all the contingent complexities and pressures. Supervisors help harness the benefits of scale (partly through their expertise being available to multiple profit centres) while minimising the possible downsides. One of these downsides is the spotlight placed on corporate farms regarding compliance (e.g. environmental and animal welfare); the systems and procedures established and maintained by the supervisor (“consistent processes for farm staff to follow”) help protect the business. As mentioned above, one gave “no negative PR” as a measure of success

Other interesting phrases were used in answer to this survey question. The words “focus” or “concentrate” were used by 7 supervisors (e.g. “transfer [strategic] focus to FMs”) as was the word “confidence”. Other expressions included:

- Facilitate a business focus on profit
- Follow up on all agreed plans with FMs
- Allow FM autonomy with accountability
- Respond to ‘alerts’ or deviations
- Read signs
- Correcting potential problems
- Control on-farm issues
- Preventing things becoming surprises
- Solve problems
- The anchor that makes sure things actually happen
- Engender confidence
- Provide a reservoir of experience
- Avoid FMs having to second guess
- Sharing what works
- Challenge status quo
- Ask the incisive questions
- Think outside the square
- Give consistent processes
- Develop quality brand

One supervisor’s summation of what they add to the farm business for which they work was:

Planning preparation and having people doing the right thing at the right time results in positive results, training others to achieve desired outcomes helps grow them and the business.

Two described their role as “pivotal” or “crucial”.

7. Skills and Experience Required

Common themes reported here were communication, people skills, financial discipline (including profit/cost focus, “know the pain of paying bills!”), technical farming capability, observation and analytical skills, problem solving skills, negotiation skills and planning and prioritising ability. Character qualities volunteered included boldness, resilience, attention to detail, open mindedness, ability to think on their feet, empathetic, dedicated and passionate.

Two supervisors' summation of the skills and experience they would look for if they were replacing themselves in their role are worth including here in their entirety:

"Tight" – they've been in business so know pain of paying bills. They're able to produce meaningful reports without trying to run farms from the computer. Recognising the value of being alongside staff, they use their own practical experience and communication skills to train/coach. They are quick thinkers, level headed and strong minded.

And this:

- Confidence and Resilience
- Dairy experience with focus on pasture and animal health
- Technical knowledge of farming
- People skills with experience in running large teams or working with diverse groups.
- Planning and Inventory Management
- Financial and negotiation
- Ability to think on ones feet and improvise

8. Aspects of the Supervisor Role Respondents Would Like to Change

More time (fewer demands on their time) or better time management would be valuable according to the statements of 12 supervisors (40%). One person expressed this as wanting more farm staff in general.

Twenty three percent would like to reduce the amount of paperwork or computer time, particularly with respect to reporting.

Three made specific reference to the fact the role can be under-rewarded. One supervisor spelt it out thus:

Most people underestimate the amount of time commitment and the mental workload of this role. Often shareholders have never looked after an entity this big themselves. The role can be undervalued - especially by farm owners that never 'paid' themselves, so have never come to terms with the true (cash) cost of managing one farm, let alone many.

Three respondents said different/better people would be helpful.

A few supervisors hinted at the tension of the 'sandwich' nature of the role. They have to work in between the people on the ground, who are daily experiencing farming with all its joys and difficulties, and the people setting the financial objectives, who are experiencing the pressure from the banks/shareholders etc. The supervisor has usually experienced firsthand leading a large team while working with less than ideal resources/infrastructure; yet they know all too well the imperative of achieving the owner's goals. One supervisor wanted "Ability to motivate even when empathising." Another talked of convincing the owners of the need to have infrastructure and people-friendly strategies in place in order to realise sustainable results; one consequence has been that this business has broken their very large dairy units down and now have an average herd size of around 700 cows.

Of the 30 participants questioned nine reported there was nothing significant they would like to change about their role. One went so far as to say they thought the way the role "encompasses the owner's perspective is exciting!"

9. Tools or Support that Would Make the Supervisors' Role Easier or More Satisfying

Assistance with data entry or processing information for reporting was mentioned by 7 supervisors (23%). The same number of respondents would like more training or smoother processes in the HR areas.

Greater access to networking or mentoring would be valued by 5 people (17%).

These people are often dealing with boards of directors, senior bank staff and owners of large non-dairy businesses. The need for better understanding of 'higher level' or business processes included:

- Governance
- Finances, including balance sheets – to use “the same parlance as shareholders”
- Monetary policy, commodity trading
- Strategic thinking, including futuring

A couple of respondents would like greater support in the form of technical tools they can use with the farm staff.

10. Planning and Implementing a Response to Significant Changes Outside the Business

The responses to this question reflect the variety of ownership and management structures of the businesses these people supervise. Also the different levels of strategy expected – some supervisors have equity in (part of) the business and/or are directors. In the survey the example given to prompt a response was the industry's direction to rapidly reduce the number of inductions carried out on individual farms. While some businesses have already implemented a zero induction policy, the example represented an external change well.

About two thirds of supervisors saw themselves having a part to play in responding to such changes from outside the business. Quite a few said simply it was just their role, many said themselves *along with* the board and a couple mentioned the management 'team'. On the other hand, a couple of supervisors were quite clear that the induction example represented a

governance issue and the direction would need to come from the board, to be *implemented* themselves.

A selection of full responses is shown below:

Supervisor points out issues and recommends a response or offset. In this setting with non-dairy shareholders the onus is greater to be aware of such things and to be able to get a message of the issues and consequences across. Shareholders would then approve.

Defining the difference between operational matters and direction is one of the tricks to having a successful multi-farm management. A good board of directors will decide on the policies and parameters that the farm will implement and run within. The general/operations manager will make sure it happens.

Me, in response to board of directors instructions or reports by myself to the board (that need some sort of action) or from various sources of information. Example of induction rule change would not be considered as is a governance issue in this business.

Discussion

1. Background Information

The supervisors surveyed are functioning in a unique position in New Zealand dairy farming – they are overseeing farms with the largest herds that on average represent only 8% of NZ’s herds size - and they are overseeing not just 2 or 3 of these, but, on average, 9.

Farm Managers that look after herds of greater than 600 cows are considered to no longer be farming just ‘cows and grass’, they are now ‘farming people’ – i.e. they are managing the people who are in turn farming the ‘cows and grass’. At this level the manager must not only be competent at transactional HR processes (that meet compliance requirements), but must also

be able to establish and maintain a workplace culture. John Fegan, during a workshop presented at the DairyNZ Farmers' Forum (J. Fegan, personal communication, May 6, 2010), explained that a subgroup exists within the 'over 600 cow' group – this is the 'over 1000 cow' group, where the FM is now working with 5 or more staff members. He would expect this group to experience some form of people challenge in three out of four years. A third of the supervisors surveyed are overseeing farms that fall into this 'over 1000 cow' subgroup, and all of them fall into the original 'over 600 cow' group. This explains the fundamental relevance of human resource aspects featuring in all sections of the survey results.

2. Responsibilities and Business Strengthening

Compiling the respondents' descriptions of their key areas of responsibility produces an all-encompassing statement along the lines of:

The supervisor takes responsibility for the outcomes specified by the owners, ensuring the necessary actions are taken to position and use resources to fulfil the business plan, which includes optimizing return on the business's assets and improving their value. The supervisor is responsible to manage the achievement of each unit's budget by communicating the owners' goals and instituting the farm management plan, by coaching, challenging and making the FMs successful, by capturing economies of scale and by extracting synergies. They are also to work to protect the businesses returns and reputation by managing all aspects of compliance and by being the 'ultimate back stop'.

How supervisors strengthen the business they work for covered a range of interesting insights. Along with the expected tangible aspects such as, "Give consistent processes for farm staff to follow to achieve results," many of the comments described 'interventions', attributes or even less tangible factors. In his paper "Modelling the origins of managerial ability in agricultural production", Peter Nuthall (2009, pg.422) distinguished between observed variables and

unobserved; similarly, in describing how they strengthen the business, many of these supervisors understand that the less tangible facets they offer are what underpin the observable 'performance' facets of their responsibilities. In other words supervisors (and FMs) bring not just competencies or skills to their role (these will be discussed in a later section), but inherent attributes that either add to or detract from their success as managers. While the papers reviewed investigated '*managerial ability*', this should be able to be extrapolated to cover '*supervisory ability*'. Further study to verify this last assumption is warranted.

Nuthall's work (2009) identified major attributes influencing managerial ability; the relative contribution of experience is 67%, intelligence 8% and personality 16%, with the remaining 9% attributable to parental influences. Objectives are intertwined to some extent with experience (via which experiences have been chosen). Not assessed was formal training or education post secondary school. He did point out that this work applied particularly to owner operators, while:

In more complex ownership structures the combined objectives of the owners and manager is less likely to be a significant factor in managerial success. (pg418)

If we assume that identifying beneficial objectives will be the result of great governance, and that the supervisors are adept at understanding, translating and implementing those objectives, then where the supervisor can have the greatest impact on managerial ability (both their own and for the FMs) is in the areas of management style and experience.

It is important to note that the value of experience is not a static thing – it is possible to 'add value' to experiences (and major decisions) through personal reflection, and especially with a group of peers, family or 'experts'. This added value becomes internalised and may later be

recognised as 'intuition' (Kuo, 1998). Supervisors can apply this developmental intention in their dealings with their FMs by helping them obtain maximum learnings out of their experiences through careful, collaborative scrutiny. One supervisor specifically commented on experience lack affecting the shape of his role compared to what he had expected:

The ability of individual farm managers is less than I thought – especially at problem solving (i.e. though their ability/background/education stack up, yet they lack 'experience').

Nuthall (2006, 2009) recognises six factors in a farmer's managerial style – each of which has either a positive or negative effect on a manager's ability. For a full review of how these have effect, Nuthall's papers should be read. Suffice to say here that, to at least some extent, those factors can either be developed or minimised (as appropriate) to enhance a manager's ability – this should again be a focus of personal development for the supervisor (of their 'supervisory ability') and of training ('managerial ability') in their relationships with the FMs.

3. *Performance Measures*

Clear expectations provide clarity of purpose and assist with prioritising tasks in any role. Some supervisors are very clear about their job description, what good performance looks like and some have part of their Total Package Value as 'at risk' payments based on that performance. These supervisors tended to work for larger 'corporate' entities.

It was surprising that some supervisors admitted they didn't have even a formal job description, "Not actually given by owners (except pat on the back). Have no contract."

Thus in some instances there is need for clarity, to avoid the sentiment, “I don't really know when I've done a good job.” For some, that clarity has been needed since before they accepted the position.

In the case of the consultants' performance, although there is always the option for the business owner to find a new supervisor if they feel the consultant is not doing the job they want, there can be a much clearer flow of information and a greater likelihood that performance will be satisfying to both parties when criteria are crystal clear. Ideally all supervisors would be able to say, “Performance reviews against set objectives; I have regular meetings with management” – and these objectives would include some of the interactions for optimising decision processes and explicitly training FMs, as described above.

4. Tasks and Deviation from Expectation of Tasks

In examining the tasks supervisors spend their time on, the divisions are never clear cut – supervisors pointed out that while doing a farm visit mainly for the purpose of monitoring, they could sort out a staffing issue and check up on the farm management calendar activities all at the same time. With the proviso that it is impossible to draw tight demarcation lines between the various tasks carried out by supervisors in their course of work, it appears that there is nearly an even split between Higher Level Activities (such as Owner Meetings or Planning) (33% of time), People Oriented Activities (29%) and Allocating/Monitoring/ Administrative Activities (38%).

However, the amount of time spent on this latter group of tasks was the source of frustration for many. Whether the source of the tension is due mainly to this specific expectation for their

role not being spelt out clearly enough at the outset, or an underestimation of the total 'size' of the role (with the administrative function being the least favoured in a busy schedule) or that this aspect has grown inevitably during their tenure may vary from person to person. Whatever the cause, given the scope of the role to impact on a farm's profit, smooth running and reputation, it is worth examining how to minimise this avenue for frustration and distraction from other (potentially more valuable) activities.

Some of the supervisors had their own ideas about how to remedy this, either by providing personal administrative help (data entry and processing support) or by automating more of this function by the use of technology (e.g. such as AgHub or MilkHub).

It is important to note that part of this role's success lies in the ability the supervisor has to process information and use it to inform decision-making. Manevska-Taveska & Hansson (2011) point out some ways to minimise bounded rationality (and therefore improve farm technical efficiency):

- Involving other participants in the decision process;
- Monitoring results;
- Use of reliable accounting information. (pg. 410)

The farm supervisor is ideally placed to utilise all of the above means and to extend the benefit of that 'better' decision process to all of the farms with which they work. Thus *using the results* of the data collected and processed through this Allocating/Monitoring/Administrative aspect of the supervisor's role contributes directly to their success.

This returns us to the discussion of time spent on various tasks and the connection between Higher Level Activities and the use of information. The greatest amount of time (both expected

and actual) is spent on Planning; here too ensuring data is noticed, gathered and evaluated well (according to a robust decision making process) contributes to the supervisors success in achieving the farm owners' goals.

It would be interesting to analyse the division between proactive and reactive types of tasks.

Two supervisors explained the difference between what they expected their role to be and how it really was by it being more "reactive" than expected. One supervisor commented that he knows he needs to "make time to do the things that will save time ultimately." Supervisors do aim to be proactive and perhaps the fact that crisis management was relatively low on the ranked list of tasks testifies to success in this for many. Interestingly, of the supervisors that reported on changes in task time distribution from what they expected before they took on the role, Crisis Management ranked lower than expected, coming in at 12th. Contradicting this is the fact that training has taken a lower priority than expected. Effective Training should minimise the time needed for FM Assist, which had risen in time allocation from what had been expected; the proviso here is that the recruitment of FMs and the systems established are suitable in the first place.

It is important that the FMs have a clear expectation of the degree (and areas) of responsibility they have themselves to operate their farm; over-dependency on the supervisor can develop if clear boundaries are not fixed. A danger in this 'connected' age, with a supervisor whose responsibility it is to ensure each farm meets its targets, is that FMs may 'abuse' the situation.

One General Manager of a corporate farming entity (not surveyed), who has supervisors 'below' him, commented that having a supervisor can make a FM 'lazy'; he was meaning that

the FM is less inclined to undertake their own monitoring, check up on progress of young stock off farm etc. In support of this notion, another supervisor quipped that “cell phones squash people’s initiative.” This thought must be tempered, of course, with the need for the healthy interactions to facilitate communications and the managers’ development, as described earlier.

5. Changes or Support for Role

Of those people whose answers were compiled over the phone, supervisors who felt they needed more time (or less time on the data collation/reporting) were quite definite on that; a couple of respondents didn’t see their current situation as tenable in the long term. One person commented that one of the requirements for a replacement for them would be that they “don’t have a life.” While this ‘need for time’ was not identified by a majority (40%), in a significant number of instances there is room for improvement in this area.

With respect to the data required as part of the monitoring and reporting aspect of this role, this introduces a tension. Good decision processes (Manevska-Taveska & Hansson, 2011), learning from experiences (Nuthall, 2009) and achievement of goals all require analysis of information and its application in making adjustments or future plans. Finding some way to reduce the manual (data gathering and entry) aspect while still having the supervisors take ownership of the monitoring could help. Whether this is via technology or by adding personnel would depend on other factors in the business. Apart from the obvious introduction of administrative support, it may be that there is room for greater specialisation at that level, with accounting or business management or even technical specialisation such as some businesses

have introduced (e.g. an animal husbandry/vet overseer). Another possible alternative to mitigate the supervisor's time pressure could be more provision for staff at a farm level.

A couple of supervisors talked about recognition and reward, with one desiring more opportunity to grow their own business/wealth. Acknowledgment by the business owner of how pivotal this role is, combined with communication between owners and supervisors, and perhaps building in appropriate performance rewards could resolve this.

Regarding the tension some felt at operating between the farm owner and FM interests, one way to reduce this is for the business to focus on "long-term sustainability" for its people; this is the expression that was used by the supervisor that had pushed to reduce the size of the largest dairy units in their enterprise and which has nothing to do with environmental sustainability. The "Balanced Scorecard" would set this goal within the 'learning and growth perspective' of its framework; the Balanced Scorecard serves as a useful model with which a business can "assess its direction, craft strategy, and define success" (Shadbolt, 2007).

Equipping the business with infrastructure and people-friendly policies (along with meeting requirements within the other perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard) will help ensure the business's continued success. Use of effective strategy tools themselves may also help reduce the tension of working between the owner and FMs – tools that help to define success in the broadest sense, and, further, what actions are required to achieve that.

The desire for greater space for personal development was a further aspect of wanting more time. Clearly augmenting the skills and experiences already acquired and being exercised by the people in this role will be of benefit to the businesses they work for. These supervisors are very

comfortable in an operational farm setting; some felt the need for more equipping to function better in the boardroom setting. This was particularly the case with supervisors of 'true' corporate businesses, where farmer representation on the board may be minimal. This general need was expressed in the desire for development in these areas:

- Leadership
- Strategy
- Governance
- Management

As may be expected, only a couple of the supervisors with equity in (all or part of) the business expressed this need.

Other training needs mentioned included human resources, computer skills and time management. These last two mesh with the need for time/data assistance mentioned earlier and simply serve to reinforce the scope of that issue.

HR training fits with the scale of operations under scrutiny and the level of staffing required for each unit. In large, multiple dairy farm businesses it is vital to step supervisors and their FMs beyond (while not neglecting) the transactional HR functions [such as job descriptions or even development plans] and into the 'soft skills' such as effectively working with different personal styles and building a team culture that reflects and achieves the owners goals.

Finally, 17% of the respondents spoke of the desire for formal links to others in same role. They recognise that their position is a relatively rare one and that, like the FMs, they too could add value to their growth in the role if they had "more time talking with others in similar roles". For such a forum to be truly suitable for sharing and learning lessons from experiences, all participants would need to approach it from a position of humility and with utmost confidentiality. During the later phone conversations, when the specific idea of networking was

mentioned, a couple responded they would be wary of participating in such a group, because there may just be “too many ‘bigheads’ in the room”. However, if such a forum could be established, with the supervisors involved having the requisite attitudes and the meetings having an agreed purpose, it could be a very effective means of enhancing development.

One supervisor is already very well keyed into their own ‘total’ learning:

I learn something new every single day. This is from my own experiences/mistakes, other people’s experiences/mistakes/opinions, farm Discussion Groups, industry conferences, other business conferences (eg: director’s institute) and the internet. For me this will continue forever. I think there is no one 'thing' that will make you better at your job, but many that must be used together.

Conclusions

Supervisors offer much to the businesses in which they work. They also offer much to the industry, given that they influence an average of 9 FMs and all their staff (maybe another 27!).

What they offer can be summarised as follows:

- Expert management of all resources to achieve owners goals;
- Deepen team culture;
- Optimise decision process and choices across multiple profit centres;
- Capture scale opportunities;
- Deliberately cultivate FM development;
- Help develop ‘intuition’ in the FMs (and their own, if they are aware and enabled to do so);
- Expert feedback to owners (particularly non-dairy farmer owners);

- Advocate for both owners and FMs as they have an understanding of the responsibilities and challenges of both.

These are large scale, multiple farm businesses, with all the contingent complexities and pressures. Supervisors help harness the benefits of scale (partly through their expertise being available to multiple profit centres) while minimising the possible downsides.

Investment in the people fulfilling this role must benefit the business.

Farm business owners need to assess how well valued their supervisor is; some supervisors already have equity in business so owners should check what form and level of recognition each supervisor feels they require for their specific “supervisor” role. For the part of some owners, they must also ensure the business is clear about such things as their structure (e.g. the separation of governance and operational roles and tasks) and the supervisor’s performance expectations. Use of holistic strategic management tools to define and review success will benefit the business and the supervisor role. Consideration of the long term sustainability of the business as a whole may be in order for some. Open communication is required at these most fundamental levels to truly invest in the supervisors.

Provision for peer support, network and/or mentoring is something the industry should look to facilitate; the business owners will need to attach importance to the time invested in this to help make it both possible and desirable.

Both the owners and the supervisors must esteem personal growth as worthwhile; targeted development in key areas will enlarge each person’s ‘supervisory ability’. Major areas identified were governance and strategy, management, human resources and time management.

On a practical level, in order to both augment the daily functioning of the supervisors, and to make room for some of the suggestions just made, determining what administrative, personnel or technological support would facilitate better time allocation is needed in many cases.

This role is vital, and the number of people functioning as supervisors is likely to continue to grow; studies that further enlighten their real and potential impact and support that helps make all of that potential possible will benefit the businesses engaging supervisors (now and in the future) and the wider dairy industry.

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Appendix 1: Literature Review

As in many developed countries (Hansson & Ferguson, 2010; Mosheim & Knox Lovell, 2009) the size of dairy herds in New Zealand continues to rise (L.I.C., 2011, pg 2):

The average herd size was 386 in 2010/11... The average herd size has more than tripled in the last 30 seasons, and has increased by more than 100 cows in the last eight seasons.

According to LIC's "New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2010/2011", 8% of all herds are 800 cows or larger, while only 4% are over 1000 cows. North and South Canterbury each have an average herd size of 757 and 749 cows respectively, the largest by region in the country. The highest concentrations of large herds in the North Island are in Hawkes Bay (657 cows) and Central Plateau (514 cows). This report details the traditional operating structures of owner operator and (various) sharemilkers, but doesn't capture businesses holding multiple dairy farms.

AgResearch data (Payne, 2011) reports that while in 2004 19% of respondents had financial investment in more than one dairy farm, the number in 2010 is now at around 26%, with 9% having an interest in 3 or more dairy farms (in 2010). KPMG's Agribusiness Agenda (2010) notes "the trend away from the one farm, one farmer owner operated model towards a more concentrated ownership structure." This report adds further:

The increase in corporate farming groups, many of which have grown out of family farms, together with greater ownership of land by Maori Incorporations and a trend towards farm syndication has increased the separation between land owners and farm operators and created new governance challenges for the sector. (pg 57)

Additionally, there is increasing interest in New Zealand dairy farms by overseas interests;

Aquila Capital Green Assets, a German fund, has acquired interests in 3983 hectares of farms in

the past 12 months (12 consents are listed on the Overseas Investment Office Decision Summaries, LINZ Web site, 2011).

There is very little in the literature specifically about the role, or even the existence, of a supervisory layer in multiple dairy farm businesses. The Federated Farmers Farm Employee Remuneration Report (2011) does have a separate dairy category called Operations Manager. Their description of responsibility is listed as “working within the farm’s physical and financial budget often negotiating with banks, and farm supply companies. Manages all aspects regarding staff and sometimes does the GST return.” The scope of this Operations Manager role then is narrower than the supervisors in this study.

Fairweather’s AERU report on social organisation of large herd dairy farms in New Zealand (1994) categorized large farm businesses into five groups; his Group 5 included very large farm units with “large numbers of workers organised under a manager or supervisor.”

James Allen (2005) investigated the pitfalls in transitioning from the single family farm to multiple property ownership and made recommendations. While the option of including a supervisor in the business is not specifically suggested, many of the recommendations he listed may touch on responsibility areas of the multiple farm supervisor. These include:

- Planning and Communication:
 - clear separation of governance from management;
 - operational plans;
 - reporting systems;

- Business and Financial:
 - financial control;
 - high levels of information usage, including use of computer technology to facilitate this;
 - capturing economies of scale;
 - systemisation of on-farm practices and policies;
- Staff Issues:
 - team culture; and
 - delegation and time management.

Dairy farm businesses are challenging to operate, with management of the whole farm system described as involving human, technical, economic, financial, risk and beyond-the-farm-gate factors (Lewis, Malcolm & Steed, 2006). Firms in orthodox economic theory are assumed to be driven by a profit maximising objective. Farmers may have conflicting financial goals including farm profitability, family consumption, farm investment, growth and cash flow (Wallace & Moss, 2001). There are also non-financial motivations that influence farmer decisions such as doing the work they like, independence, the ability to work close to home and family, meeting a challenge and being creative (Gasson, 1973). It is fair to say that “farmers in a wide variety of situations farm to make sufficient economic returns to ensure survival but also value non-economic rewards” (Fairweather & Keating, 1994). These authors went further to analyse how farmer’s multiple goals are integrated into management styles, concluding that the three styles

identified value both business and 'way of life' goals, though in different ways. They predicted their "flexible strategist" management style may represent a growing group, saying "since 1984, the emphasis in New Zealand has moved from production to profitability. The new criterion of success has become economic efficiency." (pg. 198) The growing calls for farmer environmental and animal welfare integrity over the last decade, combined with intense scrutiny of large dairy businesses in this area may add another dimension to the concept of management style. It would be interesting to examine the goals and management styles of the owners of the multiple farm businesses in which farm supervisors feature, to see whether they do in fact have distinct characteristics or if they simply represent previously identified styles at a larger scale. At the next 'level' is the managerial ability of both the supervisor and FM (in the absence of an owner-operator). From Rougoor, Trip, Huirne & Renkema (1998):

Management capacity was defined as having the appropriate personal characteristics and skills (including drives and motivations, abilities and capabilities and biography), to deal with the right problems and opportunities in the right moment and in the right way. (pg. 270)

In this paper the authors also separated out personal aspects from decision-making processes. Bounded rationality describes decision makers having cognitive constraints that result in their choices satisfying themselves (and those inherent constraints) rather than in them making fully optimised, rational choices (Manevska-Taveska & Hansson, 2011). Development of a decision making process model is reported by Öhlmér, Olson & Brehmer (1998); this is represented by a matrix of four phases (Problem Detection; Problem Definition; Analysis and Choice; and Implementation), with four subprocesses (Searching and Paying Attention; Planning; Evaluating

and Choosing; and Bearing Responsibility). Robust decision making processes add value to any business.

An extensive body of New Zealand work has been developed by Peter Nuthall of Lincoln University around farm business management, including focusing on the 'human factor' of managerial ability – its basis and the possibility of improving it (2001, 2009). He states, "The key factor in the management of land, labour and capital is the managerial ability applied."

Nuthall's work identified major attributes influencing managerial ability (2006, 2009); the relative contribution of experience is 67%, intelligence 8% and personality 16%, with the remaining 9% attributable to parental influences. Experience well internalised over time will help develop intuition, defined by Kuo (1998, p. 90) as "a display of well trained cognitive ability to handle ill-structured problems."

The growing scale of farm businesses has generated a lot of literature, from the economies available (i.e. decreased cost of production and increased profitability) (Morrison, Nehring, Banker & Somwaru, 2004; Hadley, Harsh & Wolf, 2002) to the implications for policy makers (Rodgers, 1993). The need to expand managerial ability (Alvarez & Arias, 2003), consider 'public relations' (Hadley et al) and to maintain efficiency (Morrison et al) in the face of large scale are addressed.

Finally, in the New Zealand setting, there is an increased discussion of success factors with specific reference to large scale and/or multiple dairy farm settings. This used to be largely confined to publications such as the Large Herds Conference Proceedings but is getting increasing airplay at more general forums such as the DairyNZ Farmers Forum (Fegan, J.,

personal communication, May 6, 2010) and the South Island Dairy Event (Duckmanton & Kilday, 2011)

Appendix 2: Survey

The Role of a Supervisor of Multiple Farms: Kellogg Rural Leaders Project, Sharon Morrell,

DairyNZ

Background Notes to get you thinking before you do the survey:

Growth in the sizes of herds plus multiple farming operations has led to the evolution of a layer between governance and management - the role of supervisor or operations manager...

Sometimes this is a full-time position within a business and sometimes it is outsourced to a consultant, though it may be a part time position taken on by a senior manager or sharemilker already managing a farm within the business.

How much is this role an intermediary versus a facilitator/director of synergy?

How much is clerical, how much strategic and how much hands-on?

Possible Responsibilities (in no particular order!):

- Profitability of the business
- Capturing economies of scale – resource allocation
- Ease of management
- Business ‘success’
- Coping with public perception issues ‘spotlight’
- Compliance
- Reduce business owner’s workload
- Human Resources
- Expert Input
- Management backstop (fire fighter)
- Coach / Mentor?

i.e. What *does* a supervisor do??

Now, on to the survey questions!

Supervisor/Operations Manager Role

1: What are your key areas of responsibility? *OR: What did your employer take you on to do?*

2: What time is allocated to various tasks?

Instructions: Please fill in at least one of either Column A or Column B. If you can also add either Column X or Column Y to match, that would be great. Note: If you use Column A, please match it with Column X etc!!

What you actually find yourself doing			What you thought you were going to be doing	
Column A	Column B		Column X	Column Y
% of time (or hours/week)	Or: Rank in order, 1 = most time etc	Task	% of time (or hours/week)	Or: Rank in order, 1 = most time etc
		Meeting with owner/board		
		Assisting Managers with Staff related issues		
		Assisting Managers with daily management/farm tasks		
		Allocating resources between units (e.g. stock)		
		Completing paperwork, meeting compliance		
		Setting/Reviewing budgets		
		Planning		
		Monitoring Management Calendar Tasks		
		Training		
		Crisis Management		
		'PR' or meetings with external people (eg Regional Council, irrigation groups, etc)		
		Own Training or Personal Development		
		Other:		
		Other:		

3: What are the primary causes of any discrepancy above?

4: What performance measures does your job have? *OR: How do you know when you've done a good job?*

5: How do you/your activities strengthen (*or: contribute to the success of*) the farm business in which you work?

6: If you were employing a replacement for yourself, what skills or experience would you look for?

7: What would you change about your current role (if you could just snap your fingers)?

8: What tools/support/further training would make your job easier/more effective/more satisfying?

9: Who in the business plans and implements a response to significant outside changes (e.g. reduced inductions)?

Note: Would you be willing to share a copy of your job description? If so could you please copy and send to me?

Background Data

Name:

Farming Business Employed In:

No. Farms:

Proximity of farms to each other:

Total No. cows:

Years there:

Previous Role:

Total Years Dairying:

Thanks so much for contributing to this project! Please feel free to add any comments you think would help. 😊

Appendix 3: Survey Responses

Please turn over for tabulated answers to all questions other than the task ranking (which was summarised in Table 3).

Question→ Respondent↓	<i>What are your key areas of responsibility?</i>	<i>What are the primary causes of any discrepancy between what you actually spend your time doing and what you expected?</i>	<i>What performance measures does your job have?</i>	<i>How do you/your activities strengthen the farm business?</i>	<i>What skills or experience would you look for in a replacement for yourself?</i>	<i>What would you change about your current role?</i>	<i>What tools/support/further training would make your job easier/more effective/more satisfying?</i>	<i>Who in the business plans and implements a response to significant outside changes?</i>
1	Run all aspects of this geographical area	My previous experience - expectations	Targets, KPI's achieved. HO acknowledge-ment	Focus F/Mgrs. Synergies between farms for benefit of whole	People skills, negotiating skills, Life skills, experience	More support, higher salary?	More technical support on daily basis (e.g. increase frequency of Farm Adv visits	Combo: me, head office, F/Mgrs input
2	<p>Pretty much doing what the owner doesn't have want /time /inclination to, including, but not limited to: perf mgmt, budgeting, physical and financial reporting, manager recruitment and helping managers recruit their own staff, voting (eg co-ops), negotiating good deals, dealing with key ac sales reps, dealing with bank/accountant, authorising expenditure, feed budgeting, arranging winter feed, stock rec's, compliance (meeting water consent conditions, ensuring OSH addressed...), manager training (eg how to run team meetings...). Having 1 person to talk to find out what is going on, rather than having to talk to someone on each farm.</p> <p>What If scenarios, and general comfort that there is someone staying awake at night rather than them(!)</p>	Current staff need more support, owner calls frequently	Phys and fin KPI's cf budgets.		Planning, communication, bold, dairy experience, top people skills	Better farm managers	Formal links to other in same role. Networking	Me, with board
3	Control costs, max production, maintain good staff. Have overview	External changes (e.g. Compliance needed, crises)	Staff retention, Prod targets, BCS, An Health costs, any changes have positive impact	Add consistency, monitoring, improvements, training. Develop quality brand. Overview perspective observes changes. Keep costs low, prod economically high.	Able to prioritise, adaptable, good communication, intuitive with staff, enthusiastic, motivated, have a supportive partner, "Treat business as own"	Have equal development for career AND equity growth opportunity.	Wider pool of farm staff applicants. Decrease external pressures (e.g. RC)	Me, with board
4	Develop & grow a new business, coach/lead large team, monitor & achieve financial goals, seek new opportunities.	Way role has developed, expectations.	Financial/Physical/Per-sonnel: Performance against budgets (return on investment). Farm appearance/std of R&M. Staff development, turn over, advancement.	Attention to detail (while being big picture focused), Team leadership / staff buy in.	Systems development, leadership, communication, Financial Management & Personal management	Size – would have more cows/staff/ha	Staff coaching training,	Myself – I would advise board of changes required and course of action necessary.

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5	Be owners representative	Changes in seasonal requirements, changes in company situation (sale of shares)	Achieve production and financial budgets. Via annual perf. review. I'm still employed here.	developing a strong team of managers and support staff who are focused on the company goals.	Understanding of the grass based dairy system. Good communication skills.	Less paper in my office.	Better tools to help farm teams understand the SRP and relationship between cover, quality and growth potential.	me
6	Employ S/Ms, hold them to account, max prod, manage env. Compliance, purchase farm inputs, run discussion group	evolution of the role, making tweaks	maximising production, low S/M turnover, no adverse publicity	Lead and inspire S/M, run seminars, introduce new ideas, challenge status quo. Don't do "command and control"	Significant HR and people mngmt skills. Technical knowledge of dairy systems. Ability to gain stakeholder confidence.	Nothing - it's ideal	automatic/online report filing (they send me too much paper). Online farm mapping to see what's going on with each farm.	Me. Have already implemented zero inductions - have a few grumpy S/M, but we'll get there.
7	Supervise 3 Trust farms and fulfil Trustees objvs for them. "Strengthen balance sheet by improving asset value of farms through maintaining improvements and growing productivity through improving pasture production."	Started from scratch in role, and have been left to work things out with no direct input from owners.	Just one: profit (EBIT). Actual vs. budget. Don't really I know when I've done a good job.	Have instituted firm business plan fro each farm, with sound budgets. Working with accountant have sound financial reporting system, which is updated 2-monthly.	Understanding of property mgmt (can prioritise resources, where & when). Understands dairy farm business, including budgets and sound financial recording system. Good relationship manager (S/M & trustees)			
8	Overall management. Responsibility for the dairy group within Landcorp.	Growing compliance requirements for dairying	Perf. Reviews against set objectives. Regular meetings with management	They are crucial to success.	People mgmt skills. Practical farming exp and understanding. Good financial planning and monitoring skills.	People would all get along with one another.	None. Landcorp training is beyond compare. Anything is available as required.	Either: me, board, executive
9	Manage the business on behalf of the shareholders to achieve the specified results. Managing the Financial, Physical and personnel aspects of the business.	na	Return on assets. Both through appreciation and cash returns. Seeing staff achieve their goals.	Separates governance and on farm management. Provides one point of contact for farm managers Gives consistent processes for farm staff to follow to achieve results. Detailed monitoring and reporting	1. Leadership and people management, 2. Financial experience 3. Farming experience	Role is great - Nothing comes to mind.	People management, leadership, governance	Recommendation generally comes from my role. However some directors/ business have a lower risk profile to compliance so a direction is given to manage that risk accordingly.

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10	<p>1. To develop and modify as required the five year farm plan and associated budgets. 2. To ensure the farm has access to the required people, skills and resources to achieve the Farm Plan within the budget approved. 3. To oversee the plans implementation. 4. To monitor on farm performance and amend as required achieving and then exceeding budgeted EBIT. 5. To provide accurate and timely reports on performance against budgets.</p>	<p>1. Thought role could be more hands on 2. Size of business requires more planning and monitoring than I thought 3. Intensity of management business expect/needs is higher than expected. 4. Reallocation of time to current perception of best mix 5. Didn't anticipate time in office needed to check integrity of info collected for accuracy of reporting that business required. 6. The business itself did not understand and therefore clarify at time of job offer the time these things took.</p>	<p>1. Managers meetings and on farm visits with staff where I held accountable for my advice 2. Bi-Monthly meeting on farm with selection of peers from within shareholder group 3. 10 Day achievement of key KPI 4. Annual bonus payment (25% TPV)</p>	<p>1. I would hope I provide direction and support to the crew (with as much consistency as humanly possible) to assist them get the results I need to meet the boards expectation.</p>	<p>1. Confidence and Resilience 2. Dairy experience with focus on pasture and animal health 3. Technical knowledge of farming 4. People skills with experience in running large teams or working with diverse groups. 5. Planning and Inventory Management 6. Financial and negotiation 7. Ability to think on ones feet and improvise</p>	<p>Have more time to double check some decisions</p>	<p>More time talking with others in similar roles</p>	<p>Me or those I delegate to (still me at the pointy end)</p>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ears and Eyes of the Board of trustees • Protect the business interests. Help grow the business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager the budget • Liaise with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not engaged full time. For Onuku it is around 3 – 4 days of work per month. 	<p>Nil Formal. Feedback from time to time and I guess still being engaged to provide services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent consultancy / business management input. Aiding client in growing business, dealing with day to day issues as they arise. Planning, monitoring, reporting to Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business management skills. Ability to aid in business growth. Problem solving to deal with day to day issues as they arise. Planning, monitoring, reporting to Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing major • Would be good to have extra time for business planning, strategy updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have plenty of tools / resources to use if needed. • Have fellow team members to use as a backup when needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myself, Chair on behalf of Trustees, sharemilkers

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12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key areas are to convert Grass into milk in a friendly/competitive and profitable way. Be a leader to those around and challenge an implement new farming practises. Be approachable and be a team player. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be accountable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor communication and planning. Being proactive instead of reactive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PERFORMANCE MEASURES. Total MS yield for the season. In-calf rates. Mortality %. Staff turnover. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milk composition IE GRADING. Milk is judged and graded every day. Good feedback from peers and staff 	Thinking outside the square. Never being narrow minded and willing to source new ideas and opinions. Educating myself. Being physically fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone that has great human resource management skills. Pays attention to detail. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driven/completive. Dots the eyes and crosses the tees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open minded. Approachable. Uncompromising dedication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passion Seeks advice from professionals 	Having a bit more time to educate myself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower cow to staff ratio. Office person to deal with the minor book work after hours. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human resource management paper. More knowledge of commodity trading and prices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The planning is done by both the Supervisor and the owner. All outside avenues are exhausted by contacting the experts in there fields. IE. Vets / fert reps/ RCs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets and plans formed to achieve the desired outcome and then the Managers / supervisor implements these. All the changes are monitored and feedback given to all involved throughout the process
13	Asset manager - protect asset in all regards (e.g. Soil fertility, buildings etc) - leave it better than when first started. Build the productive capacity of the asset.	na	Hitting budgeted prod at the budgeted (or updated) cost structure. Staff retention. Staff development. Not actually given by owners (except pat on the back). Have no contract.	Pivotal. Have motivation and systems so that can go away and things will be still be done to 90% of my standard. Make strategic decisions, and transfer some of that focus to managers. I solve problems!	(Haven't any life apart from farming!) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Staff management - able to talk calmly at all levels and can convey business culture well. Technical and farming experience. Planning. 	Perhaps more hands off, but may lose respect of mgrs. Employ robots (no personal issues!). Maybe employ assistant supervisor.	Already fully utilise DairyNZ resources and industry info. Keep talking to the right people. Keep getting out to external events.	Me. Phone to inform owners, report assessment and recommendation and generally they go along with my recommendation.
14	Owners rep and get the best return on the assets employed and to keep that asset maintained	people	With an annual Performance review and 10 day production records	Keep in contact with Management team and other rural professionals. Keep in contact with all Farms even when going well	Experience in Dairy Farming and good people skills	Dealing with the growing compliance issues	(Didn't comment)	The management Team

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15	Strategic direction Business Mgmt Day to day decisions Tailored responses to enquiries from people on and off farm.	na	Farms profitable. Business/asset growing. Other partners expectations met ('successful farms', cash out). Staff progressing. Farms look appealing.	Ability to run business well, directly - indirectly that engenders confidence. Assessing functionality of gear/processes in achieving targets; can override if not working well. Provides a reservoir of exp. & knowledge, uses to assess/read signs; knows who to ask for advice if not optimal.	Track record of being successful in doing the job - would value experience higher than qualifications. Proven skills in business. Empathy with people, but can handle people doing weird things. Value integrity enormously.	Likes the mix of overview and hands on. Would like to repeat mix of PA, CFO & OM that exists in second business for this one.	Strategic thinking, Futuring. Has already done Icehouse and has experience on an international board - this has helped develop the 'high view' needed.	Me. Will source external advice when needed.
16	Ensure farm is run as owner wants it run. Take over the day to day running of the business	na	Targets being met, irregular catch ups and reviews	Quality control. Ensuring managers meet targets, follow plans etc.	Passion for farming and people. Experienced farmer, driven and self motivated, able to look past now toward the future, thick skinned, good communication skills, ability to know when and what is not negotiable. Must be able to develop good relationships with staff - still able to growl even harshly and then get the farm going and keep the relationship workable.	Not much Order rain/sun on demand	Knowledge... In some areas, know he doesn't know, and has a bank of people he can call on to fill gaps.	Me
17	Overseeing budgets and spending to match. Making sure actions/performance meets plans. Staff in all regards - hiring, managing, monitoring pay etc. "Jack of all Trades"	More conversions (growth, extra responsibilities). Some reactivity.	Performance Reviews are formal. Own satisfaction from producing heaps of MS from lots of cows. Seeing improvements on farms (weeds, infrastructure). Doing things once, right.	Having combined experience with dairying and people. Laid back, to not wound up by the problems faced regularly.	People skills. Farming experience. Observant, but can also see the wood from the trees.	Paperwork overload - collation of data (e.g. Monthly management reports from all managers). Want to get all farms on AgHub	Computer literacy improvement. AgHub (for corporate reporting). Administrative support.	Depends if it's a managed farm or S/M farm... Generally a group decision.

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18		Tasks are much as expected, but there is not enough time to achieve what is desired.	Exceeding prod results, profit above budget, resources are appropriately allocated so not wasted. Staff are encouraged and engaged to achieve and 'own' results. Compliance is maintained, assets improved.	Planning preparation and having people doing the right thing at the right time results in positive results, training others to achieve desired outcomes help grow them and the business.	Good analytical skills, problem solving, understanding & exp of what is required to maintain and progress systems. Background in business planning, animal production systems. Ability to cost and compare options.	Have someone to mentor to take up some of my workload.	More time.	My
19	Achieving performance on farm, and financially. Capturing economies of scale.	na	Report monthly against strategic and business plans (with physical, financial and people measures). Operations mgmt, financial mgmt, business mgmt, people mgmt and leadership. Business growth and development. Problem solving. Conflict mgmt. Self mgmt.	Aligned with the requirements of the business to perform. The anchor that makes sure things actually happen - that the plan is actually followed.	Owned own business, focused on profit, has run a smaller business well. Good with people. Good at problem solving.	Not really, as have developed it myself. The role encompasses the owner's perspective, which is exciting.	Already strong on-farm skills, have worked to improve governance/strategy. Would like to get better at balance sheet work and have time for personal development.	Me
20	Primarily return on capital. Other responsibilities as per 'task list'. Extracting synergies from various enterprises on the farm (e.g. between sheep/beef and dairying.)	Nature of farming. Floods, weather conspire to disrupt plans. Must be flexible. I really value times when things go well (and tell my staff to as well.)	ROC achieved, measured by EBIT. Also compliance requirements, including stocktake & WOF of assets done annually.	Wide skills, long experience, education, plus being a family member of a family owned business make a good mix. (still really a blend of working manager and supervisor).	Professional person based off-farm, with business and technical skills - not necessarily full-time. Would then reshuffle staff or employ more to cover practical tasks.	Concentrate on important parts of role and drop off those that can be delegated - reduce number of days worked, as over 60 years old.	Mentoring to keep concentrated on important parts of role... As family working for family sometimes drift off to enthusiast projects.	Me, in response to board of directors instructions or reports by myself to the board (that need some sort of action) or from various sources of information. Example of induction rule change would not be considered as a governance issue in this business.

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21	Acting as absentee owner. Overseeing operations of the farms. Budgets, monitoring, (financial and production).	na	Have detailed job description, used in annual review. Targets include Investors in People standards, production, profit.	In a fortunate position where can compare figures across farms readily - then ask questions as to why one is doing less. Over time this process has tightened the range of performance within the co. Benchmarking means can ask the incisive questions. Monitoring.	Relate to people well. have been there - still able to hop into a cowshed & willing to do any task. Has track record. Have owners intentions at heart. Computer savvy. Ability to deal with a range of issues.	Getting rid of the form-filling/paperwork/consents/surveys/irrigation monitoring type demands.	Computer skills. Time management. Training (prioritising) of self to meet compliance issues first. Maybe some PA type input.	Different supervisors concentrate on different areas. (e.g. 1 for OSH, one for sale of culls and tendering supply prices, one for irrigation etc), so would depend. Would probably discuss at meetings between CEO and supervisors.
22	Facilitate profitability of the 2 dairy units. Get any synergy from the whole business. Support the 3 farm managers.	Ability of individual farm managers (esp. at problem solving - i.e. though their ability/background/education stack up, yet they lack 'experience'). Climate. Financial crash.	Cost of production. Level of production. Overall profitability.	Allows for cooperation between all units, sharing of resources. Farm managers can concentrate fully on own tasks. Facilitates a business focus on profit rather than production.	Practical knowledge. Problem solving. Ability to motivate team.	Well... I'm a farmer by preference!	Retiring. Ability to motivate even when empathising. HR - able to work with people more than just dealing with the on-farm aspects.	Me, with input from the Business Manager and board.
23	The role has evolved over the years as the business has grown. Key areas of responsibility still involve supervising 4 farms, acting as a mentor to the managers and ensuring that the farm and the teams meet their goals for the year.	Changes have occurred over the time in this business, the operation has grown, more support staff have been employed, and roles have become more specialised. Column X doesn't really apply now with being in the role for 8 years, many changes have occurred.	We have aligned performance targets for all parts of the operation, as well as individual performance criteria. These are reviewed at least twice during the year, with an end of year review to determine final outcome	My activities at all times are challenged to ensure that they are adding value in the most appropriate way and time. The objectives for the role are outlined, with goals for each farm that I work with, as well as goals for the business	Planning, Farm management, people and financial skills.	Sometimes resources for the farms would help, but all operations need to do the best they can with what they have.	I'm doing ongoing management training to continue my growth, sometimes more time to do the things that seem to miss out.	This is done by the management team, with input and recommendations from the specialist in the area, as well as input from the General Manager. Strategy planning is ensuring that we have a response to any outside changes that may impact on our business
24	Interacting with Managers, to support them and make them successful. Implementing the business plan. Bridge the gap between owners and managers. Set up management plan for following season in autumn that is aligned to budget.	na	Finaancial performance overall - that the business is growing. Pleased that the farms now function similarly to one another.	Giving managers confidence. Supporting their decisions. Avoids the managers second guessing.	Someone people get along with. Lost of practical experience (having been through a range of farming situations and challenges)	Be able to allocate time differently (currently there is a conflict with the time invested in running my own farm)	Need to become more skilled at HR/recruitment. Although the company employs an HR specialist they are in the other island! Putting a good team together.	Team: farm managers (involved in process, not just told what to do) and owner/board.

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25	<p>Everything from setting the budget (and sticking to it), to employing labour (all of my reports are LOSM or Contract Milkers), to ensuring that day to day activities are carried out on the farm as they should be. At the end of the day my role is to take total responsibility for outcomes. Generally the administration (eg: monthly accounts, GST) is done by someone else but I am required to go through and sign off all accounts prior to payment. I also attend a board meeting (approximately 1 hr) for most farm owning entities each month.</p>	na	<p>I know if I have done a good job because I get employed the following year (all of my contracts are to different shareholding companies and I only set up supervisor contracts on a seasonal basis). All farms still set KPIs based off production, cost of production, deaths, empty rates and milk quality.</p>	<p>The key is to take ultimate ownership or responsibility for outcomes. The main requirement here is to follow up on all agreed plans with managers and ensure that implementation has happened.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent people skills (both upwards to shareholders/employers, and downwards to farm managers/employees) 2. Strong pasture management/animal health/general farm management skills 3. Discipline around budget setting and implementation 4. Ability to be flexible around adapting to different strategies for different shareholders in each of the farms I look after (in other words, not all farm owners want to run the farm totally the way I would) 	<p>Can't think of anything in particular. As stated earlier, I created the role myself so things have been pretty well as I planned them.</p>	<p>I learn something new every single day. This is from my own experiences/mistakes, other people's experiences/mistakes/opinions, farm DGs, industry conferences, other business conferences (eg: director's institute) and the internet. For me this will continue forever. I think there is no one 'thing' that will make you better at your job, but many that must be used together.</p>	<p>We cover this off at board/shareholder meetings when having strategy sessions. Ultimately Directors are the decision makers but in almost every instance they are guided by my own recommendations. (Note: I am also a shareholder and/or Director in 3 of the 9 companies that I work for).</p>
26	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial - help FM create budgets, have approved, monitor to make sure they're working or make changes. Make sure physical happens to make them work to. 2. Staff mgmt - hire managers, hlp mgrs hire, review manage. Put in systems & monitor. 3. Be the back stop - take up slack if anything happens to a Farm Mgr. 4. Deal with banks to meet their requirements. 	<p>Company growth. Compliance (e.g. more consenting requirements). Increased 'demarcation'/specialisation of roles with business growth. Financial crisis has meant more covenantal requirements from bank - increased reporting to them.</p>	<p>Present budget at every board meeting, with updated forecast 2x per year. Cash results in face of the variables faced that season. Personal satisfaction from "sustainable results" - having infrastructure and staffing in good place for long term performance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. constant monitoring - so nothing ever becomes a surprise. 2. Big picture planning on a seasonal basis, enables timely mgmt. 3. Focus on financial results not just production. 	<p>Good farming skills ("operational excellence") - so not floundering around when visit - this enables the person to intuitively assess the day to day aspects and take some time observing and communicating about other aspects. Need to have common sense about money - as a minimum, a "desire" to be cost effective.</p>	<p>Most people underestimate the amount of time and the mental workload of this role. Often shareholders have never looked after an entity this big themselves. Role can be undervalued - especially by farm owners that never 'paid' themselves, so have never come to terms with the true cost of managing one farm, let alone many.</p>	<p>Most support thus far has come from owners. Cautious regarding networking with other large enterprise supervisors as suspect there is too much ego involved and not enough attention to the sustainability of these businesses with respect to current infrastructure and staffing. Doesn't think the industry has developed much in the way of support for this role.</p>	me

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27	Monitor budget, ensure farms on track. People management. Reporting/liasing between Sharemilkers and Shareholders.	New conversion contingencies. Greater reporting requirements than imagined. Steep learning curve. Still waiting on templates/structures that will better facilitate the reporting.	Reports out on time. Farms set up with resources necessary to fulfil budgets in timely fashion. KPI's still to be clarified.	Getting information from a range of farms - sharing what works helps the S/M's do a better job. Group purchasing - saves \$ and time - allows manager on ground to stay focused on on-farm performance.	Been in people management role. Proven farming record. Could offset part of job to a qualified accountant?	Have accountant do financial reporting. Have more space in management agreement - e.g. allow discretion in arranging feed contracts (i.e. Justify later & thus improve timeliness). Make monthly reporting bimonthly & do dif set of farms each month.	Accountancy support. Shared database (e.g. AgHub) - would provide more info to justify decisions. Still waiting on templates/structures that will better facilitate the reporting. Improve understanding of role of governance. Financial training - so can use same parlance as shareholders.	Depends - me and managers. Or via my recommendation to Baord - then me to implement once approved.
29	<p>Overseeing the whole business from cows and grass to the running of the accounts from budgets to cash flows, this must be within N.Z standards. Key area is to manage the asset to the best of our ability within the guide lines set out by MYFARM. Job is best described as: asset manager</p> <p>To implement and plan with on farm management for the day to day management and plan for seasonal events like mating, grazing etc, also at the cash-flow level (budget) to make the farm profit the best we can, also run the farm to the M.I.O or business plan set by the shareholders (this business plan is put forward by the Supervisor with approval from a MYFARM director or C.E.O)</p> <p>Also some H.R work with employment of staff through to equity managers</p> <p>Overseeing the whole business from cows and grass to the running of the accounts from budgets to cash flows, this must be within N.Z standards. Key area is to manage the asset to the best of our ability within the guide lines set out by MYFARM. Job is best described as: asset manager</p> <p>To implement and plan with on farm management for the day to day management</p>	The only thing I didn't really think that was going to be involved was the intensity of reports and time taken to achieve standards - lots of hours to job right	Communication from Myfarm Management General management team or the chairman of the syndicate	The more above board with information to on farm managers and shareholder's correcting potential problems and controlling on farm issues and better the communication , the better the farm will perform and the better the capital asset well return to shareholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have some on farm experience with milking cows • Understand business's budgets and cash-flows • Understand equity partnerships and can relate and talk to investors • Must have good communication and P.R skills • Must understand Dairy industry 	Less time in front of computer Less hours	Some more computer skills Free up some time to attend local field days Field days (meetings) with other people in the same field of job description	Supervisors are employed to carry out and plan all aspects of on farm management within industry regulations

Question→ Respondent↓	What are your key areas of responsibility?	What are the primary causes of any discrepancy between what you actually spend your time doing and what you expected?	What performance measures does your job have?	How do you/your activities strengthen the farm business?	What skills or experience would you look for in a replacement for yourself?	What would you change about your current role?	What tools/support/further training would make your job easier/more effective/more satisfying?	Who in the business plans and implements a response to significant outside changes?
32	Shareholder Liason, intermedeairy between shareholders and S/Ms. Formation of, monitoring and reporting of budget - mgmt of cashflow budget. Monthly visits to help where needed \$ plan for coming month. Liasing with farm suppliers. Chair on-farm meetings with shareholders.	na	None really - judged by how well the farm is going. Syndicate does annual review of relationship with MyFarm, which includes supervisors role - they are looking for value out of the admin costs levied by MyFarm. Own measures are when cashflow budget is adhered to, and when money is saved without diminishing production.	Confidence for (especially non-dairy) shareholders that someone is overseeing the S/M in all areas - can check timing and validate S/M requests. Can allow S/M autonomy with accountability.	Communication. Technical ability - both finacncial and physical. People skills - able to deal with a range of different people.	Not really, I feel the role is well defined for me. Maybe some of the people!	Have S/M think the same as me regarding communication - i.e keep in touch about significant issues and do promptly what they say they will do.	Supervisor points out issues and recommends a response or offset. In this setting with non-dairy shareholders the onus is greater to be aware of such things and to be able to get a message of the issues and consequences across. Shareholders would approve.
33	Implement board policies, write and implement budget. Work with managers to ensure owners intentions are communicated and implemented. Project manager.	Crisis management, although you know something will go wrong somewhere you just never can plan for the event. Secondly – dealing with people. Appointments, meetings and phone calls that take longer than they should.	Financial - Farms have their own budget (written by the manager) and are reviewed with the FM at the end of the financial year. This is done with me and one or two of the co. directors. Physical performance of a farm. Farms must look good and be maintained within the budget parameters.	Project Mgmt. Someone close to action that can resond to crises/changes. Cost Control. Timely monitoring means can respond to 'alerts' or deviations. By being a bit involved on-farm with close proximity, gives confidence to owners.	"Tight" - been in business so know pain of paying bills. Able to produce meaningful reports without trying to run farms from the computer. Recognise value of being alongside staff, using own practical experience and communication skills to train/coach. Quick thinker. Level headed. Strong minded.	Have less paperwork and data entry to do. Have an uninterrupted holiday.	Clerical/data entry support. Further training in use fo Excel etc. Training in governance/directorship and meeting procedures (NB: need to understand clearly the boundaries between operations and governance). Understanding monetary policy.	Defining the difference between operational matters and direction is one of the tricks to having a successful multi-farm management, A good board of directors while decide on the policies and parameters that the farm will implement and run within. The general / operations manager will make sure it happens.