

## Coaching Guide 5

# Importance of Animal Welfare

### **Aim: To explain how and why animal welfare is essential on your farm and how employees play their part**

Animal welfare is of critical importance on the farm and to the industry (a key aspect of 'social licence to farm'). The animals on this farm are our greatest asset they must be cared for and respected.

When working with cattle it is important to recognise normal cow behaviour, and to be able to recognise and report an unwell or lame cow. Working safely around livestock is essential.

At the end of this session, the new employee will appreciate their part in maintaining animal health and wellbeing.

### **Before coaching starts**

Does the employee have prior knowledge or experience working with animals?

Make sure your policies on animal welfare and relevant Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (for example milking cows and feeding calves) can be accessed by the employee.

Direct the new employee to access resources that will support them to understand animal welfare, such as the Dairy Australia Animal Welfare booklet. If they have read over this booklet before coaching, the coaching discussion will be easier.

The coaching guide requires time for the employee to develop their skills in observing the herd. It is recommended that you supervise the staff member over a couple of weeks, asking them about what they are seeing in the animals, and correcting them if they are missing health problems.

This coaching guide is supported by the online Milking and Mastitis Management program. Enrol the employee in this program through your local Regional Development Program (RDP) and revisit the coaching conversation on animal welfare as they complete the program.

## Importance of animal welfare on-farm

- Highlight the key points of your animal welfare policy to the new employee.
- Emphasise the importance of animal well-being for the animals and the business.
- Discuss the ethics of ensuring animals are health and comfortable in our care
- Discuss the importance of social license for the dairy industry and your farm business
- Ensure the employee has read over the farm policy and ask them the questions in the boxes below to check their understanding.

Animal Welfare Policy	<b>What does animal welfare mean to you?</b> <b>Why is animal welfare important for this business and for the dairy industry?</b>
Feeding Livestock	<b>Why are feeding routines important?</b>
Rearing Calves	<b>Why is it important to pay attention to each individual calf?</b>
Identifying Illness	<b>What are the common illnesses in dairy cows?</b>
Moving cows/Milking	<b>Why is it important to handle livestock quietly and calmly?</b> <b>Why is PPE and personal hygiene important (for the animals)?</b>
NLIS Tagging	<b>Why are calves and livestock tagged?</b>

## Observe the herd and reflect

- Take a paddock walk with the employee
- Observe the herd and review for any health problems
- Over the course of the first week or two, when unwell heifers/cows/calves are seen in the herd, take the employee to observe.
- Highlight the features of an unwell animal to the employee and provide details on how to report cases

Mastitis (note this is also coached in the Milking and Mastitis Management program)	<b>What is mastitis?</b> <b>Why is identifying mastitis important?</b> <b>What are the preventative measures for Mastitis?</b>
Recognising a sick calf	<b>What are the signs of a calf that needs attention</b>
Identifying lameness	<b>What is lameness?</b> <b>How would you know if a cow was lame?</b>