

Coaching Guide 14

Moving the herd around the farm

Aim: To ensure that your new employee can safely move cows to/from paddocks to the dairy and in yards and holding areas.

At the end of this coaching session, employees will be able to use the farm map to locate paddocks and paddock numbers, safely move the herd around the farm, work with animals in the race, crush and head bail, and behave appropriately when a bull is in the work area.

Before coaching starts

Does your employee have prior knowledge or experience in working with livestock?

Has the employee completed the online Milking and Mastitis Management Program? If so, some of this coaching will be revision.

Have they had coaching from you on Electric fence safety? If so, some of this session may be revision.

Plan to work on this coaching guide over a number of days, to allow the employee time to practice their observation and handling skills with your feedback. Tasks will need to be progressed as skills are mastered. Do not try to attempt it all in one day!

Prepare yourself to give feedback. This coaching guide contains practical skills that require a learner to get feedback on whether they are getting it right or not. If you have not had much experience in giving feedback, consider speaking to someone who has. Feedback is not always an easy task and advice from others can be very helpful to make the coaching go smoothly.

COVID-19

- Reinforce PPE use, personal hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of shared surfaces after each use
- Ensure the farm COVID-19 protocol for how to work with other team members is followed

Farm map and paddock board

- Use the farm map or the paddock board to locate paddocks and explain the assigned numbering and pattern of use. Discuss:
 - The paddock rotation routines of the farm
 - How this is managed on-farm and who makes the decisions
 - How the right herd is located to bring in for milking
 - How animals move from each paddock to the dairy and back (which laneways, gates etc).
 - Where the dry cows / springers / heifers are currently located
- On another day later in the week, have the employee explain to you all of the above to check their understanding in reading the farm map and/or paddock board

Using the paddock board/ farm map	Using the paddock board or farm map
Locate the right herd	Can you show me on the paddock board or farm map where the hospital herd is located?

Moving the Milkers

- Demonstrate how to move the milking herd from the paddock to the dairy, and back to their next paddock
 - Quietly – not rushed
 - Gates/yards set correctly
 - Safe crossing over or under roads if relevant on your farm
 - Watching for any unusual behaviour (lame, falling behind) or heat behaviour
- The following day have the employee demonstrate to you how to move the milking herd – give feedback where things are done well and where errors are made.
- Include a demonstration pasture (if your new employee hasn't seen this with you before) or get the employee to complete setting up or moving a temporary electric tape to allocate and checking that water is always available.
- Demonstrate how to safely bring cows onto the platform
- Are there bulls on farm? Where are they? Discuss the importance of safety around bulls running with the milking herd. What bull behaviours indicate agitation? What bull behaviours indicate the bull is calm?

Groups of cows on the farm	What different herds of cows are on this farm?
How to bring the milkers to the dairy	Why is it essential to locate the right herd? What would you do if one cow wanted to stay behind when you were bringing the cows onto the milking dairy?
Returning cows to the right herd	Who do you speak with if you are unclear about which paddock to take cows to?
How to work safely around bulls	Why do you need to be careful around bulls?
Gates, yards and fences	Show me how to set the gates at the dairy (entry and exit)

Moving individual cows or small groups of cows

- ❑ Discuss reasons why cows are kept back at milking (AI, examination, treatments etc)
- ❑ Demonstrate how to draft cows to keep them back (avoiding keeping one animal alone, to minimise stress). Make sure you break the steps down, one at a time to make it clear to the employee
- ❑ Demonstrate how to safely use your race, crush and head-bail so cows move smoothly and quietly and can be restrained adequately. Again – break it into single steps for easier learning.

How to move one cow safely	<p>Why do cows become agitated if they are on their own?</p> <p>Why might a cow be kept back from the herd after milking?</p>
Using the race, crush and head-bail	<p>Show me the potential 'pinch points' in the race, crush and head-bail</p> <p>Why might we use the race and crush?</p> <p>Show me how to put a cow in the head-bail?</p>

Applying farm rules when moving the herd

- ❑ While learning the above activities, revise the farm requirements for:
 - Animal welfare
 - Safe working environment
 - Manual handling
- ❑ Demonstrate correct lifting techniques (never attempt to lift, push, pull, carry or restrain an object or animal if you feel you are unable to do so).
- ❑ Observe the employee lifting heavy objects and handling livestock over the week – provide feedback on animal welfare, infection control (avoiding animal bodily fluids for zoonoses) and manual handling technique.

Animal welfare	<p>Why is being quiet and calm around livestock so important for their welfare?</p> <p>Why is appropriate handling so important for their welfare?</p>
Safe working environment	<p>What are the main things to look out for, for your own safety, when moving the milking herd?</p>
Manual Handling	<p>How would you decide that you needed another person to assist you to lift an object?</p>