

SENIOR OPERATIONS MANAGER – RESEARCH FARMS

NEWSTEAD, WAIKATO

CANDIDATE BRIEFING

Lead two of New Zealand's most influential dairy research farms

DairyNZ

In partnership with No8HR

THE OPPORTUNITY

DairyNZ offers the opportunity to lead two of New Zealand's most influential dairy research farms and contribute to work that shapes the future of the dairy industry.

Located at Newstead in the Waikato, Lye Farm and Scott Farm sit at the intersection of science and practical farming. Together, they provide the real-world platform where scientists, technical specialists and farming teams test ideas, understand farming systems and turn research into practical solutions for farmers.

As Senior Operations Manager, you will lead across both farms through two Farm Managers, bringing greater alignment to farming performance, people capability, planning, accountability and research readiness. You will have the mandate to lift performance, strengthen leadership and influence how the farms develop for the future.

This is significantly broader than overseeing day-to-day farm activity. You will shape a connected, high-performing and research-ready farm platform, aligning people, animals, feed, technology, infrastructure and investment with DairyNZ's current and future research priorities.

ABOUT THE ROLE

The Senior Operations Manager will provide direction and oversight across both farms, while giving the Farm Managers clear ownership and accountability for delivery.



The role will bring together farming operations, research requirements and longer-term planning, maintaining oversight of performance, people, budgets, infrastructure, investment, risk, health and safety and compliance.

You will work closely with the Research Delivery Manager, technical and science teams, Farm Managers and a broad range of internal and external stakeholders to ensure farming operations reliably enable research delivery.

At its heart, the role exists to ensure:

- Both farms are well led, properly planned and consistently managed.
- Farm Managers have clear expectations and are supported to lead effectively.
- Farming operations reliably enable research delivery.
- Resources are coordinated effectively across both sites.
- Operational constraints, risks and competing priorities are addressed early.
- Infrastructure and investment decisions support future needs.
- Continuous improvement is embedded across both farms.

ABOUT DAIRYNZ

DairyNZ exists to deliver a positive future for New Zealand dairy farming. Its vision is to make the levy the best investment of every New Zealand dairy farmer. DairyNZ works alongside farmers and industry partners to create purposeful change and provide the independent science, practical knowledge and tools required to support the sector's future.

The organisation's values are:

- Respect
- Curiosity
- Courage
- Credibility

These values shape how DairyNZ works with farmers, its people, research partners and the wider industry.

ABOUT THE FARMS

Lye Farm

World-class indoor dairy and nutrition research



Lye Farm is one of the most advanced indoor dairy research facilities in the Southern Hemisphere. The 100 hectare farm is purpose-built to support detailed research into milk harvesting, udder health, cow nutrition, milk characteristics and methane emissions.

It combines a commercial dairy operation with specialist research infrastructure, including indoor feeding facilities, research barns, intensive milk measurement systems, laboratory facilities and irrigation. The farm is home to approximately 300 milking cows, with herd size varying depending on research requirements.



Research undertaken at Lye Farm contributes to improving animal performance, nutrient management and environmental sustainability, while supporting the practical application of science on New Zealand dairy farms.

The facility also hosts industry events, field days and collaborative research programmes.

Lye Farm - DairyNZ

Scott Farm

Large-scale farm systems and environmental research



Scott Farm is DairyNZ's primary platform for larger-scale farm systems research, with a particular focus on pasture-based Waikato dairy farming systems. The 115-hectare farm milks approximately 330 cows and provides a real-world environment for evaluating productivity, profitability and environmental outcomes across different farming approaches.

Over many years, Scott Farm has hosted some of New Zealand's most significant farm systems research, including work on pasture persistence, forage performance, nitrogen management, nitrate leaching, production systems and environmental sustainability.

Scott Farm - DairyNZ



TOGETHER

While each farm has its own distinct purpose, together Lye Farm and Scott Farm provide the operational platform that enables DairyNZ to undertake research that informs decisions on dairy farms across New Zealand. Research conducted across these farms helps translate science into practical, evidence-based solutions for farmers, supporting improved productivity, profitability, animal performance and environmental outcomes.







EXCELLENCE IN A RESEARCH FARM ENVIRONMENT

Best-practice farming within a research environment means more than achieving strong production or operational results. The integrity of the research depends on the quality, consistency and discipline of the farming operation supporting it. Animal management, pasture and feed allocation, machinery use, infrastructure, data recording and day-to-day decisions must all be carried out to a consistently high standard.



For this role, farming excellence means:

- Applying strong New Zealand dairy farming knowledge across animal husbandry, pasture management, feed, machinery, infrastructure and farm technology.
- Ensuring animal welfare, stock management and farm practices consistently reflect recognised industry best practice.
- Maintaining accurate animal, production, operational and research records.
- Ensuring farming decisions support research protocols and agreed scientific objectives.
- Planning ahead so that people, animals, pasture, feed, equipment and infrastructure are ready for upcoming research requirements.
- Creating consistency across both farms without losing sight of their different farming systems and research purposes.
- Identifying and implementing opportunities to improve farm performance, research readiness, and operational efficiency.
- Presenting both farms to a high professional standard for farmers, industry groups, research partners and visitors.

This requires a leader who understands commercial farming performance but also appreciates that, in a research environment, disciplined execution, attention to detail and reliable data are fundamental to the credibility of the science.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

Lifting farming performance

The incoming Senior Operations Manager will establish clear expectations around farming performance and support the Farm Managers to deliver against them. This will require strong farm system knowledge, practical judgement and the ability to identify where standards, systems or capability need to improve, establish clear priorities and turn those priorities into practical plans for action.

Leading through others

This is not a role for someone who needs to personally control every operational decision. The Senior Operations Manager will provide direction and oversight while giving the Farm Managers genuine responsibility for their respective farms. They will need to coach, challenge and support the Farm Managers without stepping into their roles, while identifying opportunities to strengthen capability across both the Farm Managers and their teams.

Balancing farming and research

A research farm cannot always operate in the same way as a conventional commercial dairy business.

Research protocols, trial integrity, data requirements and scientific objectives can influence farming decisions, resource allocation and normal operating practices. The successful candidate will understand strong farming principles but will not become constrained by what is considered “normal” or “industry standard” when that is not realistic within this environment.

They will seek to understand the purpose behind the system, exercise sound judgement and find practical solutions that support both credible research and effective farming performance.

Building one connected farm team

While each farm has a distinctive purpose, the opportunity exists to strengthen collaboration, share resources and create greater consistency across the two operations.

The Senior Operations Manager will help build a connected “one farm team” culture while preserving the specialised capability required at each site.

Planning for the future

The role must look beyond the current season. The Senior Operations Manager will anticipate future requirements across farm systems, workforce capability, research delivery, infrastructure, technology, machinery and capital investment. They will convert this longer-term thinking into clear plans and well-supported recommendations.



Strengthening accountability and reporting

A research environment brings additional requirements around data quality, recordkeeping, protocols, reporting and communication.

The role will strengthen planning and reporting disciplines without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or removing practical ownership from the farm teams.

CANDIDATE PROFILE



We are looking for an experienced dairy farming leader who can operate beyond the boundaries of a single farm and bring together people, systems and priorities across a complex environment.

The successful candidate will combine strong practical farming credibility with the leadership and judgement required to work alongside scientists, technical specialists and operational teams. They will understand that a research farm cannot always operate according to conventional industry settings and will be willing to challenge established practice when the environment requires a different solution.

You are likely to bring:

- Proven dairy farming experience at an operations management level or senior farm management.
- Strong knowledge of New Zealand dairy farming systems.
- Experience leading managers and developing capable, accountable teams.
- Sound capability across animals, pasture, feed, machinery, infrastructure and farm technology.
- Experience contributing to farm planning, budgeting and operational performance.
- The ability to translate strategic priorities into practical action.
- Strong communication and relationship management skills.
- Sound judgement, attention to detail and confidence making decisions in a complex environment.
- An open-minded and adaptable approach, with the confidence to challenge conventional thinking.
- A relevant tertiary qualification.

Experience within a research, technical or similarly complex farming environment would be valuable, but is not essential.

THE LOCATION AND LIFESTYLE



The role is based at DairyNZ's Lye and Scott research farms in Newstead, on the eastern outskirts of Hamilton. Newstead combines a rural setting with convenient access to Hamilton's services, education, retail and wider employment centres.

The surrounding area lifestyle properties and established agricultural research and technology organisations, making it a natural base for someone connected to the primary sector.

REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

DairyNZ will offer a competitive remuneration package reflecting the seniority, complexity and industry significance of the role.

In addition to a competitive base salary, the package will also include employer KiwiSaver contributions, DairyNZ annual $500 wellness dollars, professional development opportunities, and a range of other employee benefits including discounted Southern Cross health insurance, birthday leave, DairyNZ Days, and wellbeing support initiatives.









RECRUITMENT PROCESS

No8HR is managing the recruitment process on behalf of DairyNZ.

The process is designed to give candidates a clear understanding of the role, the research farm environment and the expectations of DairyNZ, while allowing both parties to assess the alignment of experience, leadership approach and future aspirations.

The anticipated process will include:

1. **Application**
   Submit a current CV and covering letter outlining your interest in the opportunity and relevant leadership experience.
2. **Initial assessment**
   No8HR will assess applications against the experience, leadership capability and attributes required for the role.
3. **No8HR interview**
   Selected candidates will meet with No8HR for a detailed discussion about their farming background, leadership experience, career motivations and suitability for the opportunity.
4. **DairyNZ interview and farm engagement**
   Shortlisted candidates will meet with DairyNZ and may be invited to visit the research farms to develop a fuller understanding of the operations, people and research environment.
5. **Final assessment**
   Preferred candidates may be asked to complete further assessment relevant to the position.
6. **Reference and background checks**
   Comprehensive reference and background checks will be completed before an offer is confirmed.
7. **Appointment**
   The successful candidate will receive a formal offer and agree on an appropriate commencement date.

FIND OUT MORE

For a confidential discussion about the opportunity, contact:

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Ready to apply?

Apply here by clicking this link: Apply here

POSITION DESCRIPTION

DairyNZ Research Farms Senior Operations Manager

Purpose of DairyNZ

Our Purpose: ***Deliver a positive future for New Zealand dairy farming.***

Our Vision: ***To make the levy the best investment of every New Zealand dairy farmer.***

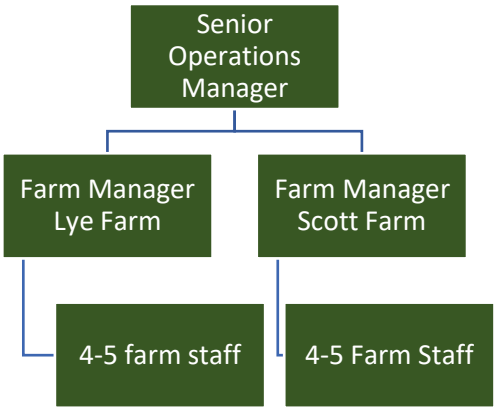
That's why we exist for farmers, working alongside them and others to leverage our collective strength and create purposeful change.

Purpose of the position

To provide operational and strategic leadership across DairyNZ's research farms, ensuring farm operations, on-farm research delivery, animal welfare, infrastructure, and staff capability are effectively managed. The role is accountable for developing, executing, reviewing and reporting against short-, medium- and long-term farm plans that support Research & Science priorities.

The Research Farms Operations Manager provides leadership and oversight across both farms, enabling and coaching Farm Managers to deliver strong day-to-day farm performance while ensuring the sites operate as a cohesive, high-performing and research-ready farm system. The role works closely with farm, technical, science and business teams to align people, animals, feed, equipment, infrastructure and investment with current and future research needs .

Team organisation chart



Key position deliverables

Key deliverables of the role to be reflected in the Performance Agreement and Individual Performance Targets.

Key Performance Requirement:	Key Indicators:
Strategic Farm Planning and Performance	• Develop and maintain integrated short-, medium- and long-term plans for the research farms, aligned with DairyNZ's business goals and Research & Science priorities. • Work with Farm Managers to translate strategic direction into clear operational plans, priorities, milestones, resource requirements and accountabilities for each farm. • Plan, review, execute and report against agreed farm objectives, budgets and performance measures. • Work with Farm Managers, science teams and other key stakeholders to ensure farm-system plans support both effective farming operations and current and future research requirements. • Anticipate emerging farm-system, workforce, infrastructure, technology and research-delivery needs, and identify the actions and investment required to address them. • Identify and lead continuous improvement opportunities that strengthen farm performance, research readiness, efficiency and long-term value to DairyNZ.
Farm Operations Oversight	• Apply strong knowledge of New Zealand dairy farming systems and industry best practice to guide effective farm system performance. • Provide strategic farm-system oversight across both farms, ensuring operational decisions support agreed research objectives, long-term farm plans and DairyNZ priorities. • Provide operational oversight across both farms, supporting and coaching Farm Managers to deliver effective day-to-day farm operations including milking, stock management, pasture management and team coordination. • Ensure high standards of animal welfare and husbandry across both farms, supporting Farm Managers to provide appropriate care and timely interventions in line with industry best practice and DairyNZ ethical standards. • Ensure animal records are accurately maintained including stock numbers, breeding, health events, transfers, weights and milk production. • Maintain oversight of pasture and feed management across both farms, ensuring grazing strategies and feed allocation align with research requirements and seasonal conditions. • Understand operational requirements associated with research trials involving pasture plots and animals and ensure appropriate escalation and communication with science teams where required
Farm Infrastructure, Machinery and Technology	• Maintain strong knowledge and oversight of farm infrastructure, machinery, milking systems and technologies across both research farms. • Coordinate repairs and maintenance priorities to minimise disruption to farm operations and research trials. • Ensure staff are trained in the safe and effective use of farm equipment and technologies, promoting best practice and minimising avoidable maintenance

	costs. • Maintain oversight of infrastructure and capital assets, identifying improvement opportunities and planning maintenance requirements.
Research Support	• Maintain operational oversight across both research farms to ensure staff, animals, feed, equipment and infrastructure are coordinated effectively. • Work with Farm Managers to allocate and share resources across sites to improve efficiency and minimise duplication. • Support effective communication and collaboration between farm teams to maintain a connected "one farm team" culture across both locations. • Provide operational support and problem solving when complex farm or research challenges arise.
Budget Management	• Set and manage farm budgets in conjunction with Farm Managers, ensuring expenditure remains within agreed limits. • Report any projected under or overspend to the Research Delivery Manager and DairyNZ Financial Accountant.
Reporting and Compliance	• Provide clear and timely reporting on progress against farm plans, performance measures, budgets, risks and agreed business priorities, including recommendations where corrective action or investment is required. • Provide reporting on farms, projects, trials and expenditure as required. • Ensure operational and research data is recorded accurately and reliably, recognising the additional reporting requirements of research farms. • Maintain oversight of operational reporting including asset registers, animal records, stock reconciliations, health and safety documentation and budgets. • Support external compliance and audit processes associated with operating as a milk supplier and research farm, including regulatory and environmental requirements.
Extension and Technology Transfer	• Support Scientists and Farm Managers in communicating research outcomes and practical insights from the research farms. • Contribute to the extension of research findings to farmers, industry groups and visitors. • Participate in presenting research and farm system insights at conferences, field days and discussion groups where appropriate. • Support farm visits, demonstrations and field days, ensuring the farms present DairyNZ research and farm practices to a high professional standard.
People Leadership & Development	• Communicate the strategy and direction for the farms, ensuring team members understand how their work contributes to DairyNZ goals. • Provide clear direction and expectations to Farm Managers, while creating appropriate ownership and accountability for delivery within their respective farms. • Lead, develop and retain a capable team through effective people leadership, coaching and performance management. • Foster a strong team culture that supports collaboration, capability development and high performance. • Support Farm Managers to build capable farm teams and strengthen technical farming capability across areas such as animal husbandry, machinery operation, research protocols and farm systems. • Build strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders including farm staff, scientists, contractors, visitors and industry partners.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing	• Promote a strong health, safety and wellbeing culture across both research farms. • Ensure farm operations, research activities and equipment use comply with DairyNZ health and safety policies, procedures and relevant legislation. • Work with Farm Managers to identify and manage health and safety risks associated with livestock handling, machinery operation, farm infrastructure and research activities. • Ensure incidents, hazards and near misses are reported, investigated and corrective actions implemented.
How We Work	• Support and model DairyNZ values and principles: Respect, Curiosity, Courage and Credibility. • Understand and adhere to company policies and guidelines. • Actively support and contribute to DairyNZ organisational culture of one team. • Actively support and encourage continuous improvement to drive our organisation forward. • Strive to provide a safe and healthy workplace • Role model industry safe working practices • Actively promote DairyNZ Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policies and procedures. • Support and encourage employee participation and consultation in all aspects of Health, Safety and Wellbeing management. • Comply with legislative requirements and relevant standards.

Key relationships	
Internal:	**External:**
Farm staff	Contractors and sub-contractors
Technician teams	Other research providers
Scientists	Farmers
Corporate Services	Vets
All DairyNZ Staff	Industry stakeholders
	Rural professionals
	Milk supply company

Qualifications and experience	
Essential:	Preferred:
A relevant tertiary qualification	Dairy research farm management experience
Strong knowledge of New Zealand dairy farming systems and best practice farm management, including animal husbandry, pasture management, farm operations and environmental stewardship.	Workforce planning experience on working with science and technical teams
Previous proven experience dairy farming at Operations Manager Level	Budget management experience
Experience in managing small to large teams successfully	Experience working within research, technical or complex farm environments where farm operations must align with research protocols.
High level of relationship management ability	
Has a people focus, experience in coaching for performance	

Job specific & technical competencies	
Category	**Descriptor/Evidence**
Leadership	Actively leads, inspires and motivates staff, providing challenging and stretching tasks, aids and contributes to compelling development plans and supports the execution of them. Proactively champions change. Develops personal profile and establishes credibility across the organisation. Demonstrates leadership within the industry.
Dairy Farm Expertise	Practical and theoretical expertise, with a foundation at tertiary level and practical experience at a management level. Takes responsibility for increasing expertise and keeping up to date with industry changes and technical knowledge. Undertakes research. Demonstrates strong operational capability across farm systems including animals, pasture, machinery, infrastructure and farm technologies, with the ability to identify issues and coordinate solutions effectively.
Planning	Accurately scopes out length and difficulty of tasks and projects; sets objectives and goals; breaks down work into the process steps; develops schedules and task/people assignments; anticipates and adjusts for problems and roadblocks; measures performance against goals; evaluates results.
Relationship Management	Identifies key stakeholders and activity develops and manages relationships with them. Can utilise relationship to influence. Builds, manages and utilises networks.
Approachability	Is easy to approach and talk to; spends the extra effort to put others at ease; can be warm, pleasant, and gracious; is sensitive to and patient with the interpersonal anxieties of others; builds rapport well; is a good listener; is an early knower, getting informal and incomplete information in time to do something about it.
Total Work Systems	Is dedicated to providing organisation or enterprise-wide common systems for designing and measuring work processes; seeks to reduce variances in organisation processes; delivers the highest quality products and services which meet the needs and requirements of internal and external customers; is committed to continuous improvement through empowerment and management by data; leverages technology to positively impact quality; is willing to re-engineer processes from scratch; is open to suggestions and experimentation; creates a learning environment leading to the most efficient and effective work processes.
Collaboration	Actively seeks to collaborate. Can demonstrate successful collaborations. Collaborates when appropriate to do so. Influences with ability to generate cohesion and inspire collaboration within areas of influence.
Budget Management	Is responsible in managing delegated budget and in assessing validity of costs. Raises budget issues with relevant authority.
I.T. Literacy	Capable of utilising all of MS Office suite to develop and deliver documentation and reporting of the required standard at a management level.

Career level competencies – People Leader	
Competency	**Descriptor/Evidence**
DECISION QUALITY	Makes good decisions (without considering how much time it takes) based upon a mixture of analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgement; most of his/her solutions and suggestions turn out to be correct and accurate when judged over time; sought out by others for advice and solutions.
DEVELOPING DIRECT REPORTS & OTHERS	Provides challenging and stretching tasks and assignments; holds frequent development discussions; is aware of each person's career goals; constructs compelling development plans and executes them; pushes people to accept developmental moves; will take on those who need help and further development; co-operates with the developmental system in the organisation; is a people builder.

DELEGATION	Clearly and comfortably delegates both routine and important tasks and decisions; broadly shares both responsibility and accountability; tends to trust people to perform; lets direct reports and others finish their own work.
KEEPING OTHERS INFORMED	Provides the information people need to know to do their jobs and to feel good about being a member of the team, unit, and/or the organisation; provides individuals information so that they can make accurate decisions; is timely with information