



Talking about risks together is Goud for business

Colouring pencils and barbecues are among the ways dairy farmers Jodie and Carl Goudswaard ensure worker engagement and participation with their small team.

The couple drew up a health and safety plan when just the two of them started out sharemilking together.

Today they run the Goud Milk operation on 130 ha at Te Kauwhata, Waikato. They have one full time worker and employ another part timer over the busy spring period.

The farm is a combination of flat and hilly terrain, with steep pastures identified as a key hazard of the business, alongside stock-handling, machinery, vehicles and plant, and chemicals.

Jodie and Carl have strict rules around vehicle use on steep land – and provide a colour-coded map of the site to all workers and contractors.

“A red area must be accessed on foot only, orange you can only take a two-wheeled motorbike – so no quad bikes or tractors – and green you can take these vehicles but need to ‘go with care’,” said Jodie.

“We involved everyone in drawing up the map so we could all discuss how areas should be coded, and I got the colouring pencils out. It includes the views of everyone working on the farm. It’s really useful, was very simple to do and achieved good buy-in from the team.”

“The more people talk about things that have happened in a relaxed way, the more reporting becomes a habit.”

New workers undergo a thorough induction, and short health and safety meetings are held during a weekly team barbecue, keeping things relaxed and encouraging workers to discuss near misses’.

“The meeting is only about five minutes but it’s very useful,” said



Jodie. “We talk about anything that may have happened that people might have forgotten to log.

“Something really valuable that came out of this was our part-time Chilean worker mentioning he’d been hosing the dairy pit when the plant began flooding during the hot water wash.

“Flooding happens very occasionally and he didn’t get any hot water on him but it flagged that up as a hazard. Now we have a strict rule of no-one in the pit during the hot water wash. Before anyone starts the wash, they’ll let other workers know.

“People will say things like ‘The bike slid out a bit in the paddock because it was wetter than I thought.’ Then everyone knows to be more aware. The effluent pipe was above the race and that was seen as a hazard, so we dug it into the race.

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Their current worker is new to farming so as part of his training they are working through a different section of their risk register with him every month.

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“We don’t just give him the manual. We talk about it and ask ‘what do you think about this?’” When any worker is new to a task, we do a brainstorm with them every time – discussing, before they start, what they think the risks of that particular day’s tasks will be.”

Contractors, including electricians, silage contractors and vets also do work on the farm. Jodie carries out an annual on-site review with them.

“We talk about our health and safety processes and theirs. Most contractors have a good understanding of risk management through their own policies but it’s important to also talk about any unexpected hazards they might encounter on our farm – and they appreciate that. For instance, we have a central pivot irrigator that leaves deep wheel ruts which could be hazardous if you drive into them.”

Jodie says the major benefits of their approach are worker buy-in and good reporting.

“Our workers contribute to decisions and that helps them to feel part of the business. For us the benefit is people are reporting issues so others are aware of the risks and we can work out the best way to address them. Overall, it’s having a culture that gives us confidence that all of us will go home safely every night.”

WORKER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The best outcomes are achieved when a business and its workers work together on health and safety. Worker Engagement and Participation is about having planned ways for:

- > workers to give input on issues which will (or are likely to) affect their health or safety. This includes asking for and taking into account their views and
- > workers to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis (eg by raising concerns or suggesting improvements).

This will help you and your business to make better decisions – and keep your people and productivity thriving.

KEY POINTS

Ensuring all workers, including contractors can contribute to identifying issues and solutions means:

- > great worker buy-in
- > regular reporting of hazards and near misses
- > shared responsibility for health and safety
- > more confidence that everyone will go home healthy and safe.

For more examples and information visit [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)
