



## Effective Management Demands Clear Responsibilities

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One of the biggest reasons that dairy farm work is not completed well and on time is a lack of clearly delegated responsibility and authority. Heat detection is an example of a very important, but frequently unassigned responsibility. When questioned about whose responsibility this is, dairy managers too often reply, "Oh, that's kind of a responsibility for all of us, especially when someone is feeding or milking." Translation: no one is responsible for heat detection.

Dairy managers who want to move their businesses to higher levels of performance and profitability need to make sure that no important work falls through the cracks. Do this by delegating responsibility for work and the authority to see that it is done appropriately. Work is much more likely to be completed in a timely manner when an individual person is responsible and has the authority to accomplish it, especially if the individual knows that there are consequences associated with the results.

Consider these benefits of clear, effective delegation:

*Specialization.* There are limits to the time and expertise of any one person, and managing a complex, modern dairy business can quickly reveal those limits. Dividing management responsibilities allows people to focus on certain systems within the dairy operation. This increased focus enables the specialist to gain a higher degree of control over his assigned responsibility. The result should be greater profitability and less variation in the dairy systems.

*Motivation.* Nothing de-motivates people more than the feeling of powerlessness. On the contrary, feelings of empowerment in one's work can serve as a great motivator. Delegating new responsibilities to valued employees or aspiring family members is a wonderful way to demonstrate your appreciation and growing confidence in a person. It is also a great way to win the employee's loyalty.

*Individual growth.* In addition to motivating an employee or aspiring family member, delegating responsibility is the best way to help an individual to grow. New responsibilities let people experience success and failure, both of which are essential to the learning process. Those hoping to bring young family members into the business should pay special attention to this.

*Stress relief.* It may be difficult at first to trust others with important responsibilities, but the results are well worth the initial anxiety. A manager who is able to develop other people will reap abundant rewards when the others apply their time and newfound talents.

Returning to our example, consider a dairy where a herdsman is responsible for heat detection. The herdsman and the dairy manager agree on expected heat detection rates that can be achieved in each month and they review performance on a regular basis. The herdsman knows that in order to achieve his goals he must dedicate time to heat detection. Consequently, he

actively observes the cows at the most opportune times. The manager and other dairy workers respect the herdsman's heat detection times and do not interrupt him, thus giving him the resources and authority to do the job. In order to increase his skills, the herdsman seeks advice from the veterinarian and AI company representative.

In this case, responsibility and authority for heat detection have been effectively delegated to the herdsman. The chances are great that the herdsman will see that the job is done well. Clearly, delegation of responsibility and authority are an essential part of effective management.