

Just the Job Information Sheet

Job title

Shepherd General

Job description

Shepherds are involved in a wide range of livestock management activities. In addition to using their dogs to work with sheep, cattle and, on some farms, deer, they are involved with pasture management, including the measuring and planning of feed supplies. Animal welfare is top priority and shepherds have an important role in monitoring stock health and working with their manager to resolve any issues affecting any animal. An essential tool is the daily livestock diary that shepherds maintain to record details such as stock numbers and movements. Environmental considerations are very important and shepherds need to work within best practice guidelines. This includes the management of weeds and pests and the safe handling and disposal of chemicals. Depending on factors such as the size of the farm, a shepherd may also undertake general farm duties, such as fencing or feeding out by tractor.

Qualifications required

As a shepherd general you will ideally have (as a minimum) a National Certificate in Agriculture Level 2 and be working towards one of the higher qualifications identified below:

- National Certificate in Agriculture (Level 3)
- National Certificate in Agriculture both Sheep & Cattle (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Deer Farming Level 3 (if working with Deer)
- National Certificate in Production Management

General requirements

Ideally, you will:

- have sound basic maths and English language skills
- have a proven ability (or at a minimum some training) as a Shepherd or Stockman in keeping with the responsibilities of this position;
- be able to provide your own trained working dog(s);
- be self-motivated and able to communicate effectively with staff at all levels;
- be able to work as a member of a team, share ideas, follow instructions carefully, and ask questions to seek clarification when uncertain
- be willing to attend appropriate training courses to develop further skills and experience when required;
- have an understanding of, and an interest in farm work and livestock

- handling
- have a current New Zealand driver's licence.

Training costs

Costs for training can vary from year to year. Please visit the websites for training providers to get up-to-date information.

Career path

A Trainee Shepherd or Shepherd General will progress based on stock, pasture, business and people skills.

A typical progression might be:

- Shepherd General
 - assists the Farm Manager to carry out general farming operations and stock work.
- Senior Shepherd
 - assists the Farm Manager to carry out general farming operations and stock work with more autonomy and less direct supervision.
- Head Shepherd
 - assists the Farm Manager and Stock Manager to ensure overall planning and farming operations are carried out.
- Stock Manager
 - assists the Farm Manager to ensure overall planning and farming operations are carried out and acts as second in-charge.
- Farm Manager
 - is responsible for the financial and physical performance of the farm and as such will be highly skilled in all aspects of the farm business. They are responsible for implementing the short and long term business plans and are expected to drive the business to ensure success.

The time between promotions will vary depending on the ability of the individual and the willingness and drive they have to learn, improve, and accept responsibility.

Beyond Farm Manager there are (in corporate farming organisations) other managerial roles, such as Farm Business Manager who would be responsible for the management of a number of farms.

Salary range

In 2013, the starting salary for a Shepherd General would be between \$30,000 and \$40,000 plus. The amount would depend on qualifications, experience and proven ability. Employment conditions can vary, and benefits offered to farm workers as part of a salary package may include:

- free or subsidised accommodation or housing
- free or subsidised power, phone, food, or meat

- transport or petrol allowances
- training and education
- production and performance bonuses

How to increase the chances of successfully entering this industry

Completing a recognised course and developing a hard-working attitude is the best way of increasing your chances. Make sure you understand stockmanship and proper animal care. During your course time, purchase a good dog and make sure they are properly trained. If you can show an employer that you have a well-controlled dog you have a huge advantage.

Other places to source information about this job

Beef + Lamb New Zealand
CareersNZ
Primary ITO
Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre
Telford, a division of Lincoln University