

Just the Job

Information Sheet – Sheep and Cattle

Job title/s

Trainee / Assistant or Junior Shepherd / Farm hand

Job description

- Assist with moving and feeding sheep and cattle
- Drafting
- Animal health treatments and shearing
- Looking after stock and general farm maintenance

Qualifications required

No formal qualifications required, but it helps if you can handle sheep and dogs, and have a liking for animals in general. You need to be able to get on with other people, and be prepared to work very hard at certain times of the year, such as docking.

Training costs

These vary, as Agriculture ITO training is subsidised by the industry and some employers will cover the remaining costs – if you pass! Some introductory courses are free, while more advanced courses cost a few hundred dollars. Remember you will be learning while you earn.

Location of job

Lifestyle is a big attraction of working on a farm. It's a lot of outdoors work. Sheep and cattle farms are scattered all over New Zealand, but most are in the eastern and central North Island and the South Island High Country.

Career path

Starting as a farm hand you will move up to shepherd, head shepherd then farm manager, making the day to day decisions for running the farm. Or if you like shearing, fencing, farm forestry, rural retail, you could progress in any of those industries.

Salary range

As a trainee, you would start at about \$12-\$14 an hour, but often your salary package can include things like housing, electricity, meals or meat that are worth a lot – it depends where you are located.

Once you move up the ladder, and if you are good at your job, your salary can climb quickly.

Other careers this profession could lead to

- * Farm adviser
- * Corporate farm manager
- * Consultant
- * Shearing
- * Research
- * Fencer
- * Contractor
- * Stock agent
- * Field rep

How to increase the chances of successfully entering this industry

It can be a bit tricky to get into the industry without knowing someone, but there are several avenues to try. Meat & Wool NZ run day-long events for Year 10-13 students on working farms. Their field reps are also in contact with farmers and are a good place to start.

Taratahi, Telford and Smedley offer pre-entry training courses, so contact them to find out about entry procedures.

Cadetships through Landcorp and other corporate farmers are possible.

Otherwise, check with rural recruitment agencies and the local newspapers. And of course, your local Agriculture ITO training adviser.

If you're interested in shearing, try local contractors. Tectra – www.tectra.co.nz – is the national training provider for wool handling qualifications.

Other places to source information about this job

Meat & Wool New Zealand – www.meatnz.co.nz – has a lot of information and resources about careers and the industry as a whole.

www.agricultureito.ac.nz