

11

**ALTERNATIVE DAIRY FARM EMPLOYMENT/DAIRY FARM TASK SHEETS**

doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040590b.11

Wallace Philippa. *CASE MANAGER Timaru Branch, ACC CantechHouse—Level 7, 24 George Street, Timaru* philippa.wallace@acc.co.nz

**Background** Injured rural people often have significant injuries with long recovery periods and they are returning to highly physical roles—many of them on farms milking in excess of 1000 cows. As an ACC case manager, with a high proportion of my clients rurally

based I am aware of issues relating to finding appropriate light duties on the farms they are employed on. Another issue can be that On Farm Accommodation is often a part of the job package, and if injured staff are off work for any length of time they can be asked to leave the farm accommodation. Many of the young people then move into town/cities and in some instances if another person is employed to fill that role, the length of time the injured client takes to return to work, can mean that job may be lost.

**Objectives** To ensure these young people are not 'lost' to the industry should they be asked to leave the farm accommodation after an accident. To look closely at medical duration for the type of injury and to ensure ongoing claim costs do not spiral, due to the client having no job to return to.

**Method** ACC needs to investigate thoroughly the scope of the workplace the client is returning to—so ACC begins by gathering data on the pre injury farm employment. To do this the ACC188 task sheet has been revamped, and specifically worded to investigate the potential for light/alternative duties as a starting point to keep a job safe. For example—a dairy farmer may tell ACC that his farm is 200 ha, however he will identify only 180 effective ha. That 20 ha is looked at as a possibility for light duties by asking what that 20 ha is used for—is it for instance a wet land planting; a farm forestry block; a quarry; waterway plantings; leased to a neighbour etc. In some instances this can be a good place to begin.

However in many instances the current employer is just too busy to consider having his injured employee back on the farm in the short term, often fearful that further injury will reflect badly on him. The employer, in many instances, must replace the injured employee immediately to limit the impact on his business of being short staffed.

If the injured client is a young person, being away from work for any length of time can often have a detrimental effect—they get out of the routine of work, and lose contact with peers and work-mates.

ACC has also sought a local business to work alongside the dairy farm to accommodate the injured person. This local motel offers homely accommodation, and two meals per day, to ensure no barriers stop a successful participation.

**Results** The results we see is that the workers skill set is maintained and in most cases enhanced. Good ongoing communication between ACC and previous employer—client able to return to pre injury job—not lost to industry.

**Conclusions** Often a clients return to work is much quicker than expected, due to having confidence built up, and being supported by both farm staff and an occupational therapist as tasks are added as the injury resolves.