

# “Hitting the Wall”

## Motivating people on farm (family and staff teams)



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- Recognise when your team have “hit the wall”
- Recognise and reward good jobs and good people and their accomplishments in your business (family and employed staff)
- Encourage, value and support collaboration in your teams
- Invest in your people

If you have ever trained for a marathon you have probably heard the phrase “hitting the wall” which occurs in the last few miles and is a direct result of a lack of energy, forcing the runner to slow down to a walk and feel like they cannot go on. You may have seen this in your on-farm teams and it is at this stage your skills as a manager can come into play. You are the team coach to motivate, help and support your team to get over the finish line!

### Recognition and rewards

During this pandemic, managers may be the only witnesses of extraordinary efforts employees are making to stay focused and productive. Sincere, informed acknowledgement of these efforts can go a long way. Recognise outstanding accomplishments during team meetings or find some other way of showing you have noticed and that you care:

- Acknowledge a good job done- extra diligence or act of kindness, by saying thank you and/ or offering a gift card or meal voucher.
- Celebrate small wins in the business with cake or a cooked breakfast for the team (good cell count result, a birthday or a job well done)
- Standing orders with the local bakery for regular cake delivery/ home baking
- Ensure communal areas such as the tearoom are warm and have basic equipment for people to take a comfortable break. Provide occasional boxes of sweets or biscuits so people can relax and switch off while having their breaks.
- Foreign teams may particularly value a social/communal space to relax with their co-workers with a dart board, pool table and internet access to support their wellbeing.

### Encourage and support team bonding

Acknowledge and empathise with people’s feelings- small things make a big difference. Offering encouragement and support by asking if there is anything you can do to help and/ or support individuals, ensuring you stop for 5 minutes and actively listen. Ask how people are, how are the family, how was their evening and if they are OK?

- Encourage mutual reliance and friendship among co-workers by encouraging people to praise and thank one another for their efforts.
- Value collaboration and teamwork by commenting on good work or good efforts and saying thank you.
- Share best practices across teams and praise the individuals or teams doing this- via white boards, posters celebrating successes like improved SCC results, WhatsApp messages and texts.
- A branded piece of clothing or kit with your farm name or business logo is a highly prized asset and can boost morale and foster team feeling (high viz jackets, hats, body warmers).
- Start family or team meetings with a check-in before diving into business. Ask people to share one thing that has gone well this week and one thing that has not gone so well.

- Consider a socially distanced get together - an online talent show, quiz night or a games night. If your events typically involve eating or drinking together consider a clay pigeon shoot, an outdoor BBQ with heaters, or just a few beers after work.

**Managers who meet their teams' bonding needs:**

- Make employees feel a part of the team
- Are people orientated
- Care about employees on a personal level

## Continue to invest in your team professionally and personally

Your team's motivation level will depend significantly on how valued they feel as a member of your organisation.

- Offer training relevant to people's roles or their personal development.
- Providing employees with opportunities for continuing education can be highly motivating.
- Organise short regular training sessions on farm with your vet/ advisor or online training/ webinars.

**Managers can support teams by:**

- Empowering team members by allocating a project or task that they are responsible/ have authority for
- Giving team members challenging assignments
- Helping team members learn and grow

## Focus on your team's safety and communicate your commitment to this.

- Treat people fairly - Encourage team members to speak up and listen to what they say.
- Overcommunicate. -Normalise asking for help and try to offer help before it is asked for.
- Let people in your business know their wellbeing comes first.
- Consider how you can work flexibly within teams (rotating early starts and sharing out/rotating less pleasurable tasks across the team).
- Start doing individual check-ins to cement that each team member's safety is considered too. Do not be afraid to ask how people are and stop and listen.

## Practical areas that will reassure and help staff feel safe and secure to help get them over the finish line:

- Ensure contracts and risk assessments are up to date.
- Provide staff with a key worker letter for when they are travelling locally during lockdown reinforce their importance to your business/ the industry.
- Help any foreign staff who have not yet applied for the settlement scheme to feel settled and secure in their roles now and in the future.
- Ensure up to date personal protection equipment (PPE) is available to all the team; including the provision of face masks, steel toe capped boots or wellies and high viz and consider laundry facilities on site for overalls and workwear to be washed and stored at the farm.
- Commit to an event/ team social.
- Commit to spending 5 mins with each person in your team 1:1. Give them and their concerns your full attention and actively focus on listening- you will not be able to fix them everything, but do not let that stop you from asking.