



FARM PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE RESOURCE GUIDE

Small Team, Big Pressure:

Stop the Operational Handbrake.

How to keep husband-and-wife teams or small family farms strong.

For husband-and-wife and small family farms, where stress and pressure are starting to spill into relationships and reduce work efficiencies.

What this resource gives you

A practical guide to improve structure, fairness, reporting, and team confidence.

Best used when

The business is feeling pressure, drift, mixed messages, or uncertainty about what is really happening on the ground.

The Problem

Small farms often run on trust, speed, and sheer grit. That works for a while. Then pressure starts building. Jobs get blurred, decisions get personal, and the work spills into the relationship.

This guide is for the business where:

- Business load is shared between family members, and duties, responsibilities and authority are not clear.
- Personalities, and perceived power and influence skew decision-making.
- Staff are in the middle of mixed messages, and confusion increases.
- When that structure is missing, standards slip, and good people walk out the gate.

Friction rarely stems from inaction; the real operational handbrake is often your existing business structure.

The Solution

1. Define Authority and Accountability
2. Formalise Roles and Reporting Structure
3. Establish Professional Boundaries
4. Develop a Standardised Induction Process
5. Formalise the Review Process



1. Define Authority and Accountability - Get clear on who does what

If everyone is doing everything, nobody is accountable, and nothing is properly finished.

Ask yourself:

- Who makes the final call on staff, spending, livestock, cropping, or machinery decisions?
- Does there need to be a discussion first, or can it go straight to the decision maker?
- Where are the handover points between the two of us?
- What jobs are being done twice?
- What jobs are being dropped because both of us assume the other one has it?

Ask your staff:

- Who do you go to when you need a decision?
- Are you ever getting different instructions from different people?
- Is there anything you are doing because you are trying to keep the peace instead of because it is the right way to run the job?

2. Formalise Roles and Reporting Structure

A farm can survive on memory for a while. It usually starts to crack when pressure goes up.

You need a simple structure that shows:

- Who is responsible for each area, enterprise, block etc
- Where there are multiple people responsible, what is the hierarchy or chain of command?
- What is the process for decision-making and approval?
- Who is the backup if someone is away?

Ask yourself:

- If one of us is away for a week, would the business still run cleanly?
- Does every person on the property know who they report to?
- Have we written down the basics, or are we still relying on memory?
- Have things changed, and how often should these things be revisited?

Ask your staff:

- Do you know exactly what your job is?
- Do you know what good performance looks like?
- Do you know what matters most each day, or are you guessing?

3. Establish Professional Boundaries - Stop the job from becoming the relationship

When the business is messy, the relationship pays for it. Where that is between spouses or family members

Ask yourself:

- Are we arguing about the business, or are we carrying unresolved tension into every business conversation?
- Are the same issues coming up again and again because nobody has fixed the underlying issues?
- Are we both trying to control the same part of the business?

Ask your staff:

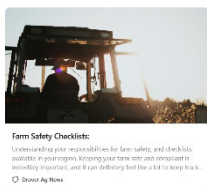
- Does the way we run things feel fair?
- Do you feel comfortable saying when something is not working?
- Do you ever hold back because you think it will come back on you?

4. Develop a Standardised Induction Process

Even a small team needs a proper start. Yes, even if they are family members.

At a minimum, every new person should understand:

- The property layout – a map with labelled paddock names and main features like sheds, yards, water points and water lines.
- The job expectations – role responsibilities, tasks, duties, available equipment
- Who they report to – a clear written chain of command, ideally as part of a position description.
- Safety basics – it is important that you know your legal responsibilities on this. In general terms, think about what should happen in an emergency situation. Think first aid, communication (phone service, radios, checking in), shift planning. Then there is reinforcing safe work processes like personal protective equipment, sun safety, safety around machinery, stock, confined spaces etc.



Think Safety: In this article, Drover Ag lists the Farm Safety resources available in your state. [READ MORE...](#)

- How feedback works – be clear on how often reviews will be conducted, and what to do if there is important feedback or issues between reviews.



Ask yourself:

- If we hired someone tomorrow, could we put them through a proper induction? Or would they learn by watching and hoping?

Ask your staff:

- Did you get a proper introduction to the place?
- Do you feel we explained what was expected, or were you left to work it out?
- When you needed help, was it easy to ask?

5. Formalise the Review Process - Keep reviews honest and calm

If reviews are only a chat after something goes wrong, they are not reviews. They are damage control. You need a clear structure and timing for reviews, and they should be more frequent with new and younger/less experienced staff or those who have a large bearing on business outcomes.

Ask yourself:

- Do we review performance regularly, or only when we are frustrated?
- Is the person giving feedback also the person controlling the outcome?
- Would the other person in the business agree with the story we are telling ourselves?

Ask your staff:

- Do you feel the review process is fair?
- Do you feel listened to?
- Do you think you could give honest feedback without it being held against you?

So, what does good looks like?

A healthy small farm business usually has:

- Clear roles
- Simple reporting lines
- A comprehensive induction
- Honest staff conversations
- Regular and meaningful reviews
- Less guessing and less personal friction

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Family farms are complex, remember to seek separate professional advice on your farm's legal business structure (consult your accountant or financial advisor) and family succession planning (consult a specialist advisor).

Ready for an honest check-up?

Want help with this process including full accountability of all parties and without the politics? That is where Drover Ag and the Farm People and Performance program come in...

Check out the free and confidential Farm Team Health Check that helps us identify your structural gaps [DO THE QUIZ NOW](#)



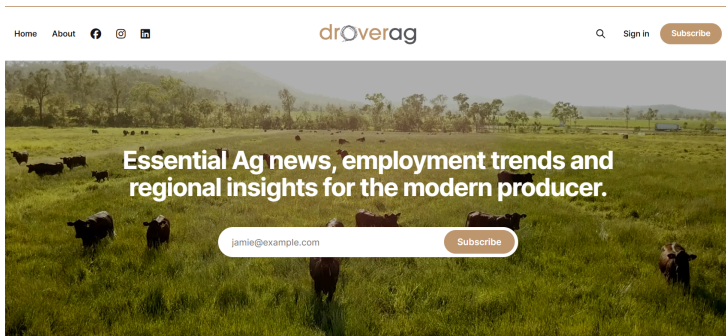
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Invest in your most valuable assets:
You and your people.

- ✓ Farm Team Health Check
- ✓ Rural Working Style & Personality Assessment

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