



UNION NEWS

FOB value of NZ Exports:

(FOB = includes the return to NZ farmers as well as meat processing costs and profit, transportation to port and loading)

Year	2000	2008
Lamb	1,530.2	2,171.7
Mutton	168.6	360.9
Beef/Veal	1,403.8	1,657.8
Venison	157.5	287.5
Offal	109.9	175.7
Other Mts	64.3	125.6
Hide/skin	291.0	240.5
Tallow	65.4	155.4

Stock numbers fluctuate:

(000 Head) Breeding Ewes last year were 26,063 this year 23,594.

Lambs slaughtered during 2007 were 25,880 in 2008e 24,438.

Breeding cows last year 1,195 this year 1,126.

Dairy Cattle last year 5,261 this year 5,554. Total beef last year 4,394 this year 4,254. Deer last year 1,396 this year 1,606.

2008-09 NZ WEEK 14- 3 JAN

- Lamb slaughter down -4.3%
- Mutton down -1.9%
- Steer up +0.2%
- Heifer up +7.1%
- Cow up +64.4%
- Bull down -5.3%
- Total beef up +8.9%
- Bobby veal up +29.7%

NZ Meat Workers Terminated "AT WILL"

A number meat companies terminate their employees for extremely short periods i.e. pay out all holidays accrued plus expect them to return to work when required, in some cases without the right to have their accrued holidays. A minimum payment can be gross \$464.41 weekly. Many meat companies prefer to terminate their employees than pay a weekly pay better than the Unemployment Benefit.

Ask yourself the question - **when was your last pay made up to the agreed weekly minimum payment ? do you even have in your agreement a weekly minimum payment ?**

Many NZ employees are paid a salary, that is a fixed amount of pay paid weekly for 52 weeks per year. Management will not agree to negotiate a Salary with the Union. We are able to negotiate piecework schemes and hourly rate schemes with a weekly minimum payment should stock numbers fall in that week or production is affected by Hygiene Requirements or mechanical failures. This clause was agreed in the old meat workers Award as a "back stop" to protect meat workers from earning less than a reasonable livable wage. A number of meat companies see a minimum wage payment as reducing their flexibility, so will not agree to pay.

Many meat workers are 'fed up' with early days, no kill days and being terminated for short periods, longer periods and at the end of the season, they now prefer to look for work in other industries where they may get paid a good hourly rate for 40 hours a week and for 52 weeks of the year. Who can blame them? Resulting from an Employment Court ruling on Holidays, meat companies now regularly terminate meat workers whenever they are likely to pay the weekly minimum payment. Hence why many meat workers feel they are employed "at will" = "at the will of the Boss".

Some employers in the meat industry value their existing workforce poorly, hence this industry has very high turnover. **Retention of skilled workers is important, to retrain skilled workers is an expensive option.**

AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE

Inflation [CPI] was running at 5.1%, expectations are that this will drop back quite dramatically, forecast 4.2% 2009. Reserve Bank is pulling down interest rates forecast 2.4% 2009. Average private sector wages were up 5.2% average ordinary time hourly wage is now \$24.33 (\$22.64 in the private sector and \$30.77 in the public sector).

ANZCO [CMP] will guarantee employment for the first 12 months of employment to overseas migrants. Further, if stock numbers fall during the season then they are retained on \$14.25 per hour for 30 hours per week or \$427.50 weekly. This is better than that offered to existing NZ meat workers that have worked loyally for the company for many years.

The Union that acts for all Meat companies is the Meat Industry Association [MIA]- They are now very interested in employing an additional 1,000 overseas immigrants in the season. They are keen on the Recognized Seasonal Employer Scheme [RSE], like the Horticulture industry. They wish to avoid the current system of seeking ministerial approval [Govt].

Animals ready for slaughter can be held over on farms during seasonal peaks, unlike strawberries, pip fruit and grapes. NZ Herald - on 17 January '09 said "A net 17% of firms say it has become easier to find skilled labour and a net 43% say it is easier to find unskilled labour - in both cases the highest since 1991".

AFFCO has already started employing migrants from the 'working holidaymaker scheme'. These are overseas workers in NZ on holiday, they have no loyalty to NZ nor the company and they rarely have skills. They are only allowed to be employed by the same employer for 3 months. AFFCO's turning down local NZ workers at the gate unless they have packing and knife skills - no jobs unless skilled?

Production is being lost in many plants simply because the employer is not retaining enough trained staff. Employers need to reinvent the wheel - "learner mutton chains". There is a skill shortage in the meat industry simply due to the minimalist training approach adopted by the industry since 1991. Slaughterman & Boners require long term training.

Health & Safety News

Sub-Branch Officials need to notify the National Health & Safety Co-ordinator Amanda Stephens 0800 690 690 of any newly elected Health & Safety Delegates. They will be issued with the latest Health & Safety packs. Their names will then be put forward for Stage 1 training.