



Problem Behaviour, Poor Performance and Misconduct



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Problem behaviour, in a farming scenario, can be wide ranging from poor timekeeping to animal welfare issues. Problem behaviour is something that is often left to run on too long for fear of conflict. However, it is best dealt with as quickly as possible. Often issues that may seem small to one person can have a big impact or really cause irritation to another. This could be as simple as a member of staff not returning the medicine book to the same place each time, for example. A simple issue that, if not dealt with in the correct way, could lead to arguments and pent up frustration, leading to overall discord in the team.

The following hints and tips should be read alongside the other publications in this series including “Objectives and Appraisals”, “Getting the Most From Your Staff” and “Managing Conflict”.

Use your judgement

- Problem behaviour can range from poor time keeping to theft. It is important to use your judgment to tackle each problem individually and appropriately.
- Think about why this is arising. It may be down to poor initial communication, have you been clear on when their start time is?
- How severe is the problem? How you deal with suspected theft compared to someone being late every Saturday morning needs to be handled differently.

Do not jump to conclusions

- Ensure one to one discussion is carried out and the employee is given time to explain their actions.
- Has the employee been made aware that this is a problem? It may be that this was routine in their last job?
- Review previous conversations/appraisals, has this been discussed before?

Do not ignore it

- Problem behaviour must be addressed as it will likely only worsen and could damage the business productivity and morale of the other members of staff.
- Ignoring the problem is likely to lead to pent up frustration which may manifest itself in an explosion of emotion at a later date which will not be productive.
- If you fear confrontation will end in conflict, approach this properly in a calm and rational way (see Managing Conflict).



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Gather evidence

- Rely on factual information and direct observations, reducing the chance of false accusations.
- Keep a record of the issue before speaking to them. This is a good way for the employer to notice if it is really as bad as it seems, to avoid any issue being blown out of proportion.

Be consistent

- Establish clear boundaries by treating all instances of problem behaviour in a clear and consistent manner.
- This is particularly important where there is more than one member of staff. Everyone should be treated equally even family members.

Be clear about the consequences

- When addressing unacceptable behaviour, state clearly what will happen if their behaviour does not improve and follow up your words with concrete actions.
- Follow the Dismissal Flow Chart in this series which shows the formal disciplinary steps which can be taken.

