

Rick Thiessen

Farm Manager

Career Description

A farm manager plans and coordinates the overall direction, financial management, human resources and marketing activities of a farm business.

Interview

Rick Thiessen began managing his own chicken farm in Abbotsford back in 1989. He now produces about 2.2 million kilograms of chicken each year – enough to feed over 72,000 people!

Initially, Rick put in a lot of hours to build up his business. In addition to raising chickens, he also started a small trucking and storage business that handles feed and feed ingredients for local commodity brokers. Today all that hard work is starting to pay off as he has more time to spend with his young family.

“I don’t spend a lot of time in the barns anymore,” admits Rick. “I have a production manager that handles most of the day-to-day work around the farm. Instead, I make all the business decisions and also play an active role in our industry association.”

Rick’s typical day starts with some fun with his kids before seeing them off to school. Next he’ll meet briefly with his production manager before heading off to an industry meeting. Then it’s back to his home office to do some accounting or evaluate a new opportunity he’s considering. “I’m always looking for ways to improve the business,” he notes, “always looking for my next challenge.”

Rick didn’t attend college or university. He simply started his business and continues to learn from experience. “I grew up on the farm so I knew how to raise chickens,” he explains, “but I still needed to learn how to manage a business.

“You need to be able to think logically and approach things in steps. Slow methodical thinking goes a long way, but some quick thinking and math skills definitely won’t hurt.

“What I like most about agriculture is the variety it affords you,” he concludes. “I just couldn’t see myself doing anything else.”

Key Quote

“You can’t put a price tag on the lifestyle of living and working on a farm – there’s simply no better way or place to raise a family.”

Ask Rick: How can I get started?

“If you think you might be interested in agriculture, a good first step is to get a part-time job on a farm. We produce over 200 different types of agricultural products in B.C., so try different things and find something you like. Then start working your way up.”

Primary Location

- All regions

Interests/Skills

- Accounting
- Decision Making
- Entrepreneurship
- Problem Solving
- Leadership

Suggested Qualifications

- Certificate, Diploma or Degree in Agriculture or Business and/or relevant work experience

Education and Training Opportunities

- University College of the Fraser Valley, Chilliwack
- University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Related High School Subjects

- Mathematics
- Business Education
- Accounting

Related Careers

- Dairy Herdsman
- Farm Business Consultant
- Berry Grower
- Feedlot Manager

Did you know?

- The average Canadian eats 30 kg of chicken a year. (Source: BCMAL Fast Stats, 2005)