

Dairy Farmer interview questions

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What to expect

Dairy farmer interviews are practical and often happen on the farm. You will be asked about your daily routine, animal handling and how you keep the dairy running safely and reliably. The interviewer wants to know you can work independently and as part of a small team.

- **Process:** Questions about the daily milking routine, pasture management and record keeping, to check you understand the full cycle of farm work.
- **Technical:** Questions on udder health, herd nutrition, equipment maintenance and software, to test your hands-on knowledge.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for examples of how you handled herd health issues, equipment breakdowns or team conflicts in the past.
- **Scenario:** Questions that put you in a realistic farm situation, such as a sudden disease outbreak or a broken pump, to see how you prioritise and solve problems.
- **Safety:** Questions about chemical handling, working with large animals and machinery, and your understanding of work health and safety on a farm.

Interviews for dairy farm roles often start with a phone or video screen, then move to an on-farm interview and practical assessment. You might meet the farm owner or manager and, on larger farms, a herd manager or operations supervisor. Expect a walk-through of the dairy or a short trial milking shift as part of the process.

1. Walk me through your daily milking routine, from bringing the herd in to cup removal and plant cleaning.

Why they ask

This is a core process question. The interviewer wants to hear that you follow a consistent, hygienic routine and understand why each step matters for milk quality and animal comfort.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through. Start with bringing the herd in calmly, then describe udder preparation, cup attachment, monitoring for milk let-down, cup removal, and finally the cleaning cycle for the plant. Mention any checks you do along the way.

Example answer

"First I bring the herd in quietly, using the same route each time so they are settled. I check for any cows that look lame or unwell and draft them for a closer look. In the dairy, I prep each udder by wiping and checking for signs of mastitis, then attach the cups. I watch the milk flow and make sure cups come off when the quarter is empty. After milking, I run the plant wash cycle and check the filters. I also record any health issues or production notes before I finish."

2. How do you monitor udder health and manage a case of mastitis?

Why they ask

This tests your technical knowledge on the most important health issue in dairy. The interviewer wants to see you can spot problems early and follow a treatment plan.

How to structure your answer

Identify, assess, act, follow up. Explain the signs you look for, how you confirm a case, what treatment you use, and how you prevent spread.

Example answer

"I monitor udder health at every milking by checking for heat, swelling, clots in the milk or a drop in production. If I suspect mastitis, I strip the quarter and use a rapid test to confirm. I follow the farm's treatment protocol, which usually means antibiotics under vet guidance, and I mark the cow so her milk is withheld. I record the treatment and recheck her at the next milking. I also review the herd's teat-spraying and bedding routine to stop it spreading."

3. Tell me about a time you had to manage a herd health issue or disease outbreak.

Why they ask

This is a behavioural question. The interviewer wants a real example that shows you can stay calm, act quickly and communicate with others when animals are at risk.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result. Set the scene briefly, explain what you were responsible for, describe the actions you took and the outcome.

Example answer

"We had an outbreak of calf scours across a batch of 20 calves. I was the main calf rearer at the time. I isolated the affected calves, cleaned and disinfected the pens, and changed the feeding equipment between groups. I worked with the vet to adjust the milk replacer and electrolyte plan. I kept a close watch on the healthy calves and recorded every feed and treatment. We lost two calves, but the rest recovered and we had no new cases after the first week."

4. A key piece of milking equipment fails during the morning milking. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a scenario question. It tests your judgement under pressure, your ability to prioritise animal welfare and your practical problem-solving.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure. First, ensure animal welfare and milk quality are not compromised. Then assess the fault, communicate with the team, and decide whether to repair, switch to a backup or adjust the routine.

Example answer

"I would stop milking immediately and check the herd is comfortable. Then I would identify the fault, for example a vacuum pump failure or a blocked line. If it is a quick fix, I would repair it and restart. If not, I would call the manager or the technician and move the cows to a holding area with shade and water. I would let the team know and adjust the roster. If there is a backup system, I would switch to it. The main thing is to keep the cows safe and avoid any risk to milk quality."

5. What are your usual safety checks before starting work on the farm?

Why they ask

Safety is a core part of farm work. The interviewer wants to hear that you think about chemical handling, machinery and animal handling before you start.

How to structure your answer

List and explain. Describe the checks you do at the start of the day, then give a specific example of how you apply them.

Example answer

"Before I start, I check the dairy and yards for anything that could trip or injure someone. I make sure the milking plant is safe to operate and that the chemical store is locked. I check my personal protective equipment is clean and ready. When I handle chemicals, I read the label and follow the safety data sheet. With animals, I always use the right race and head bail and avoid working alone"

with a bull. If I see a hazard, I fix it or report it straight away.”

6. How do you keep records of herd production, treatments and compliance?

Why they ask

This tests your organisational skills and understanding of why records matter for milk quality, animal welfare and farm audits.

How to structure your answer

Describe the systems you use, what you record and why. Mention both paper and software tools, and how you make sure records are accurate.

Example answer

“I record production and health data at each milking, either on paper or directly into DairyCOMP 305. For treatments, I note the cow ID, the product, the dose and the withholding period. I also keep a chemical register and a farm diary for any maintenance or safety issues. At the end of the week, I check the records are complete before they go to the herd manager or for an audit. I use AgriWebb for paddock and feed records so I can see the whole farm picture. Accurate records help us make better decisions and keep the milk supply safe.”