

Farmer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for farmer roles are usually run by the property owner, a farm manager, or an agricultural recruitment consultant, and tend to be more practical than corporate hiring processes. Expect questions about how you actually handle day-to-day tasks and unexpected problems, not just your qualifications on paper.

- **Process:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd approach a specific farm task, such as planning a rotation or managing a breeding program
- **Scenario:** Judgement questions built around a sudden problem, such as a weather event, disease outbreak or price shift, testing how you'd respond under pressure
- **Behavioural:** Questions about a real past situation, looking for evidence of decision-making, resilience and problem solving on the job
- **Technical:** Questions on machinery operation and maintenance, chemical handling, or use of farm management and monitoring tools
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions on WHS practices, biosecurity and regulatory obligations relevant to livestock or crop production
- **Business and financial:** Questions about budgeting, cost tracking and how you use production data to guide decisions

These interviews often start informally, with a conversation about your farming background and the type of operation you've worked on. From there the conversation moves into specific task and scenario questions, and many employers will follow up with a property walk-through or a short trial on machinery or with stock to see the skills in practice rather than relying on the interview alone.

1. Walk me through how you'd plan a crop rotation for a paddock you hadn't worked with before.

Why they ask

This checks whether you actually understand how soil type, climate and past cropping history should drive seed and rotation choices, rather than following a fixed routine.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a step-by-step walkthrough: what you'd check first, what information you'd gather, how you'd weigh the options, and what the final decision would depend on.

Example answer

"I'd start by getting a soil test done if one wasn't recent, and I'd ask about what had been grown there over the last few seasons so I'm not repeating a crop that's already stressed the soil or built up disease pressure. I'd look at rainfall patterns for the area and match seed varieties to that rather than using whatever variety worked well on a different paddock. I'd also factor in market prices for likely crop options before locking anything in, since the best agronomic choice and the best financial choice aren't always the same paddock to paddock."

2. Tell me about a time you had to make a quick call because of a weather event.

Why they ask

Weather risk is a constant part of farming and employers want evidence you can act decisively without over-reacting or freezing up.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and task, the specific action you took, and the result, including what you'd do differently if it happened again.

Example answer

"We had a forecast change overnight that brought heavy rain forward by two days, right when we were partway through harvest. I checked the moisture readings and weather monitoring app first thing, then made the call to push the crew to run extended hours and prioritise the paddocks most at risk of lodging, leaving the more resilient ones for after the rain. We got the vulnerable paddocks in before the weather hit, and it reinforced for me that checking the data early and moving fast matters more than waiting to see if the forecast holds."

3. How would you handle a sudden outbreak of illness in the herd?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and whether you know when to act yourself versus when to call in a vet, which matters for animal welfare and biosecurity.

How to structure your answer

Frame this as a judgement-under-pressure answer: immediate actions to contain the risk, who you'd involve, and how you'd balance speed against getting it right.

Example answer

"My first step would be to isolate the affected animals to limit spread and check whether it matched any notifiable disease signs, since that changes who I need to contact straight away. I'd get a vet out rather than guess at treatment, and in the meantime I'd check feed, water and recent movements for a possible cause. I'd also record everything as it happened, both for the vet's benefit and to update herd health records once it was under control."

4. What experience do you have operating and maintaining machinery like tractors and harvesters?

Why they ask

Machinery downtime during planting or harvest is costly, so employers want to know you can operate equipment safely and do basic maintenance rather than relying entirely on outside mechanics.

How to structure your answer

Answer with specifics: the types of machinery you've run, your maintenance routine, and an example of a problem you caught or fixed yourself.

Example answer

"I've operated tractors and harvesters across planting and harvest seasons, and I do daily pre-start checks on fluids, tyres and belts rather than waiting for something to fail mid-run. On one occasion I picked up on an unusual noise from a harvester header early in the day, stopped to check it, and found a bearing starting to go. Sorting it before the day's run meant we avoided a breakdown in the middle of harvest, which would have cost far more time to fix under pressure."

5. How do you track farm costs and yields, and what would you do if a paddock or herd was underperforming?

Why they ask

This is a business management question checking whether you treat the farm as a financial operation, not just a production task.

How to structure your answer

Structure as a system-and-decision answer: describe how you record data, then walk through the decision process you'd follow once a problem shows up in the numbers.

Example answer

"I record input costs, yields and stock performance in farm management software rather than relying on memory or paper records at season's end. If I saw a paddock consistently underperforming against similar paddocks, I'd first check whether it was a soil, drainage or variety issue rather than assuming it was a one-off weather effect. Depending on what I found, that might mean changing the seed variety, adjusting fertiliser rates, or in some cases recommending the paddock be used differently altogether."

6. What steps do you take to manage WHS risks on a working farm?

Why they ask

Farms carry higher injury risk than most workplaces, so employers want evidence you take safety seriously as a daily habit, not an afterthought.

How to structure your answer

Answer with a hazard-identification-and-control structure: how you spot risks, what controls you put in place, and how you keep others on the property informed.

Example answer

"I do a walk-around before starting any task involving machinery or livestock to check for obvious hazards, like loose fencing near a yard or ground conditions that could tip a vehicle. I make sure anyone working with me knows the specific risks for that day's task, not just general farm safety, and I keep machinery guards and PPE in proper use rather than treating them as optional when things get busy. If something's not safe to do that day, I'd rather delay the task than push through and risk an injury."