

Grain Grower interview questions

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What to expect

Grain Grower interviews usually mix practical field knowledge with business and safety judgement. Employers want to see you can make decisions in the paddock, operate machinery safely and keep records that stand up to audit.

- **Technical and agronomy:** Questions on crop rotations, soil testing, disease and pest identification, and chemical application.
- **Machinery and operations:** Questions on header, tractor and seeding equipment operation, maintenance and harvest logistics.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions on chemical handling, WHS, storage and environmental rules.
- **Business and planning:** Questions on budgeting, forecasting, grain marketing and supply chain decisions.
- **Behavioural and scenario:** Questions about weather setbacks, equipment breakdowns and team coordination during peak periods.

A typical interview starts with a conversation about your background and farming experience, moves into technical and machinery questions, then covers safety and compliance. You may be asked scenario questions about harvest or spraying decisions. The interview often finishes with your questions about the farm, its rotation and its approach to soil health.

1. Walk me through how you plan a cropping rotation for a mixed wheat, barley and canola program across a full season.

Why they ask

Tests your agronomic planning, sequencing and understanding of break crops, disease and herbicide groups.

How to structure your answer

Use a chronological walk-through: start with soil tests and paddock history, explain crop choice and break crops, cover input and machinery planning, then finish with how you review results and adjust.

Example answer

"I start by reviewing soil test results, paddock history and herbicide groups from the previous seasons. I map out which paddocks will grow wheat, barley or canola, making sure I have enough break crops to manage disease and weed pressure. Then I build a budget for seed, fertiliser and chemical, and line up machinery and labour for sowing and harvest. Through the season I inspect crops regularly and adjust inputs if moisture or disease pressure changes. After harvest I compare yield maps and costs against the plan so the next rotation is better."

2. How do you decide when to apply a herbicide or fungicide, and what records do you keep?

Why they ask

Checks your technical judgement, resistance management and compliance habits.

How to structure your answer

Use a decision framework: identify the pest or disease, check thresholds and labels, consider weather and resistance, then explain your record keeping.

Example answer

"I first identify the weed, pest or disease and check whether it has reached a threshold that justifies spraying. I read the label for the active ingredient, application rate and withholding periods, and I check wind, temperature and rain forecasts. I rotate chemical groups to manage resistance. After application I record the date, paddock, product, rate, weather conditions and operator, and I keep those records in Agworld and in a chemical register for audit."

3. Tell me about a time you had to adjust harvest plans because of unexpected weather.

Why they ask

Assesses your problem solving, communication and ability to protect grain quality under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and the weather change, explain your task to keep harvest on track, detail the actions you took, and give the result in terms of time, grain condition or storage.

Example answer

"In one season a forecast rain event arrived earlier than expected while we were mid harvest. I was responsible for keeping the headers moving and protecting grain quality. I checked paddock moisture with the agronomist and prioritised the most mature paddocks first. I moved trucks to the closer silo and arranged extra chaser bins so we could keep cutting. We finished the susceptible paddocks before the rain and stored the grain at the right moisture, which avoided a downgrade."

4. You notice a patch of crop with yellowing leaves and stunted growth two weeks before harvest. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests your field diagnosis, judgement under time pressure and ability to act without overreacting.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement under pressure structure: stop and assess, collect information, diagnose likely causes, take proportionate action, then communicate and record.

Example answer

"I would walk the patch and compare it with healthy areas, checking for patterns like wheel tracks, spray overlaps or drainage. I would dig up a few plants to inspect roots for disease or insect damage, and take a soil or tissue sample if needed. If it looks like a nutrient issue or a localised disease, I would consult the agronomist before making a broad treatment decision. With harvest close, I would avoid unnecessary spraying and instead mark the area for separate storage or testing, then record what I found for next season."

5. How do you manage chemical storage, handling and application to meet Australian regulations and keep workers safe?

Why they ask

Checks your understanding of WHS, APVMA labels, ChemCert and environmental responsibilities.

How to structure your answer

Use a hazard control and compliance structure: storage, handling, application, PPE, records and emergency response.

Example answer

"I store chemicals in a locked, ventilated shed with bunding, away from water sources and according to the label and Safety Data Sheets. Only trained staff with current ChemCert accreditation handle and apply chemicals. Before spraying I check the label, weather and buffer zones, and I make sure everyone wears the right PPE. I keep a chemical register with dates, products, rates and paddocks, and I have spill kits and emergency contacts available. After use I triple rinse containers and dispose of them through the correct drumMuster program."

6. How would you manage grain storage and transport logistics during a tight harvest window?

Why they ask

Tests your supply chain planning, communication and ability to keep grain segregated and within receival standards.

How to structure your answer

Use a logistics planning structure: forecast volumes and quality, plan storage and segregation, coordinate transport, communicate with buyers and staff, then build in contingency.

Example answer

"I start by estimating daily harvest volumes from each paddock and checking available storage space and silo segregation. I plan which grain goes to which silo based on protein, moisture and variety, and I book transport to match the harvest rate. I keep the header operators, chaser bin drivers and truck drivers in contact by radio so no one waits. If rain is forecast I prioritise paddocks and may use aeration or drying if needed. I also keep buyers and the receival site updated so deliveries are not rejected, and I record every load for traceability."