

Sheep Farmer interview questions

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What to expect

Sheep farming interviews are practical and often include a farm walk or yard test alongside a conversation. Employers want to see that you can handle stock calmly, make sound decisions in seasonal conditions, and fit into the property's routines.

- **Technical and husbandry:** Questions about breeding, nutrition, animal health and wool production that test your hands-on knowledge.
- **Safety and farm systems:** Checks that you follow safe work practices with machinery, chemicals and livestock handling.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Past examples of working in a team, handling conflict or managing a difficult season.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypothetical situations that require you to prioritise animal welfare, feed and market decisions.
- **Process and planning:** How you plan a joining program, manage grazing rotations or prepare for shearing.

Often starts with an informal chat about your background, then moves to a property tour or practical session in the yards. You might be asked to draft sheep, condition score, or demonstrate safe quad bike operation. Final conversations cover pay, accommodation and seasonal expectations.

1. Walk me through how you plan a joining program for a self-replacing Merino flock.

Why they ask

Employers want to know you can set up a breeding program that matches lambing time to feed availability and market targets.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through of your season: ewe preparation, ram selection, joining period, and how you monitor results.

Example answer

"First I condition score the ewes and draft them into mobs by body condition. Then I select rams based on fleece measurement and conformation, using Sheep Genetics data to avoid inbreeding. I aim to join for six weeks so lambing aligns with spring pasture growth. I record which rams go into which mob and then at lambing I mark lambs and record survival rates. After weaning I review the results and cull any ewes that failed to rear a lamb."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a flock health issue. What did you do?

Why they ask

Animal health is a core part of the job, and they want to see you can spot problems early and act.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"We had a mob of lambs that started scouring and losing condition. I drafted the affected lambs into a smaller paddock and collected faecal samples. The vet confirmed worms, so I drenched the mob and moved them onto clean pasture. I also reduced stocking pressure and monitored the mob daily. The

lambs recovered and we finished them on time. I now do regular worm egg counts to catch issues earlier."

3. You notice a mob of ewes with low body condition scores two weeks before lambing. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement and ability to prioritise animal welfare and production under time pressure.

How to structure your answer

A scenario response: assess, prioritise, act, and monitor. Show you can make a call with limited time.

Example answer

"First I would assess the mob more closely, checking how many ewes are affected and whether it's a feed quality or health issue. I would draft the thinnest ewes into a smaller paddock and give them access to better pasture or supplement. If feed is short, I'd buy in hay or grain and feed them daily. I would also check for any underlying disease. The priority is to get condition back on those ewes before lambing, so I would monitor them every few days and adjust as needed."

4. What safety checks do you do before starting a quad bike or tractor?

Why they ask

Farm machinery is a major risk, and employers need to know you follow safe work practices.

How to structure your answer

A process answer: list the checks in order, from pre-start to operational.

Example answer

"For a quad bike, I check tyre pressure, brakes, and that the load is secure. I always wear a helmet and make sure I'm not carrying passengers unless the bike is designed for it. For a tractor, I do a walk-around check for leaks, check engine oil and coolant, and make sure the implement is properly attached. I also check that the rollover protection is in place and the seatbelt works. I never start a machine if I'm unsure."

5. How do you decide when to sell lambs and wool?

Why they ask

This probes your commercial judgement and understanding of market cycles.

How to structure your answer

A judgement-based answer: explain the factors you weigh, such as feed availability, market prices, and animal condition.

Example answer

"I look at the seasonal conditions and feed on hand first. If pasture is drying off, I'd consider selling lambs earlier to avoid buying feed. I also watch the saleyard reports and wool market indicators. For wool, I time shearing so the fleece is in good condition and then sell through the broker when the market is reasonable. I don't try to pick the top of the market; I aim for a consistent return that covers costs and keeps the flock healthy."

6. Describe your experience with NLIS and record keeping for sheep movements.

Why they ask

Compliance and traceability are non-negotiable in the sheep industry.

How to structure your answer

A direct technical answer: explain what you've done, which tools you use, and how you keep records accurate.

Example answer

"I've used the NLIS database to record all sheep movements, including purchases and sales. I tag lambs with NLIS tags at marking and make sure the PIC on the tags matches the property. I also keep a farm diary and use Mobble to record paddock moves and treatments. When I sell through the saleyards, I provide the necessary movement documents. I check the database regularly to make sure everything is up to date."