

Station Hand interview questions

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What to expect

Station hand interviews are usually short and practical, often run by the property owner or manager rather than an HR team. Expect a mix of direct questions about hands-on experience and safety, sometimes followed by a trial day or working interview on the property itself.

- **Process/technical:** Questions checking you actually know how to do core tasks like mustering, fencing or basic vehicle maintenance, not just that you've heard of them.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past situations, such as handling a sick animal or working through a tough season, to see how you think and react under pressure.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations, like equipment breaking down in a remote paddock, to test practical problem-solving with limited resources.
- **Safety:** Direct questions about safe operation of machinery, vehicles and livestock handling, since this is physical work with real injury risk.

Interviews often start with a quick chat about your background and licences (White Card, driver's licence, firearms if relevant), move into questions about specific stock and equipment experience, and finish with practical or logistical questions like availability, accommodation and willingness to work variable hours. Many employers will follow up with a short trial or working day before confirming the role.

1. Walk me through how you'd muster a mob of cattle or sheep from a back paddock into the yards.

Why they ask

Tests whether you actually understand the practical steps and animal behaviour involved, not just that you've been near livestock before.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear step-by-step walk-through: preparation and equipment, how you approach and move the mob, how you manage pace and stress on the animals, and how you handle them once they're in the yards.

Example answer

"I'd start by checking the paddock and gates beforehand so I know where any problem spots are. I'd bring the quad bike and work with the dogs if there are any, moving in from behind and to the side rather than pushing straight at the mob so they move calmly instead of scattering. I keep an eye on the slower or younger animals and adjust pace so nothing gets left behind or overheated. Once we're near the yards I slow right down and let them filter in rather than rushing the gate, which cuts down on injuries and stress."

2. Tell me about a time you noticed an animal wasn't right and what you did about it.

Why they ask

Animal welfare and early detection of health issues are core to the role, and this checks attentiveness and judgement.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, what you were specifically responsible for, the action you took, and the outcome for the animal and the operation.

Example answer

"During a daily check I noticed one steer hanging back from the mob and favouring a leg. I separated it out quietly so it wasn't pressured by the others, checked the leg for obvious injury or swelling, and reported it straight away so we could arrange a vet look if needed. We ended up treating it for a minor strain and it recovered within a couple of weeks. Catching it early meant it didn't get worse or need to be culled."

3. Say you're out fixing fence on your own and the ute won't start to get you back. What do you do?

Why they ask

Remote and solo work is common on stations, so employers want to see sensible judgement when things go wrong away from help.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure: state your priorities in order (safety first, then problem-solving, then communication), and explain the reasoning, not just the outcome.

Example answer

"First I'd make sure I'm not in immediate danger, like heat or dehydration, and check what water and shade I have. Then I'd try the basics on the ute, checking battery connections and fuel, since that fixes a lot of issues. If I can't get it going, I'd use the radio or phone to call in my location and let someone know I need a pickup, rather than trying to walk out in bad conditions. I'd rather lose an hour of work than take a risk with no one knowing where I am."

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

Why they ask

Machinery and vehicle incidents are a real risk on stations, so employers need to know you take pre-use checks seriously, not just competency in driving.

How to structure your answer

Checklist-style answer: run through the specific checks in a logical order, from equipment condition to protective gear to the task itself.

Example answer

"Before I get on a quad bike I check tyre pressure, brakes and that the throttle and steering feel normal, and I always wear a helmet even for short trips. For a tractor I check fluid levels, that guards are in place, and that I know what attachment is on it before I start any PTO work. I also think about the ground conditions, since a lot of quad bike incidents happen on slopes or in wet paddocks, so I'll change my route or slow down if the terrain looks risky."

5. Tell me about a time you had to get through a busy period, like marking or a big muster, as part of a team.

Why they ask

Seasonal work often means long hours with other station hands and contractors, so this checks how you cope with pressure and cooperate with others.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set the scene of the busy period, your role in it, the specific action or contribution you made, and how it turned out.

Example answer

"During marking we had a big mob to get through in a couple of days with a small crew. I took on running the cradle for most of the first day so the more experienced hands could focus on injections and marking, and I made sure we kept water and shade breaks going for the team so no one flagged in the heat. We got through the whole mob on schedule without any major injuries to stock or people, and a few of the newer guys said the steady pace made it easier to keep up."

6. How do you monitor stock health day to day, and what are you actually looking for?

Why they ask

This checks practical knowledge of animal husbandry rather than general enthusiasm about working with animals.

How to structure your answer

Explain-with-example: describe your general routine, then give a concrete example of a sign you look for and what it might indicate.

Example answer

"On a normal day I'll drive or ride through the paddock and watch how the mob moves and grazes rather than just counting heads. I'm looking for anything standing apart, walking stiffly, or not coming in for water. Dull coat or scouring can point to worm burden or poor feed, so if I see a few animals looking off I'll check body condition scores across the mob rather than assuming it's just one animal, and flag it to management if it looks like more than an isolated case."