

Aquaculture Farmer interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Interviews for aquaculture farmer roles usually combine a conversation about your practical experience with questions that test your judgement on water quality, biosecurity and safety. Employers want to know you can work independently, follow protocols, and keep good records.

- **Technical:** Questions about water quality management, feeding systems, stock health and equipment operation.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for real examples of how you handled disease, equipment failure or teamwork on a farm.
- **Scenario:** Questions that put you in a specific situation, such as an oxygen drop at night, to test your judgement under pressure.
- **Regulatory and compliance:** Questions about aquaculture licences, biosecurity records and audit preparation.
- **Safety:** Questions about boat work, chemical handling, risk assessment and personal protective equipment.

The process often starts with a phone or video screen, then an on-site interview with the farm manager or owner. You may be asked to walk through a typical day, and some employers include a practical task such as checking water quality or demonstrating equipment use. The final stage may be a trial shift or a chat with the team.

1. Walk me through how you monitor and manage water quality in a recirculating aquaculture system or sea cage.

Why they ask

Employers need to know you can maintain optimal conditions for stock health and recognise problems early.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through: start with daily checks, then describe how you use YSI probes and loggers, how you interpret readings, and what adjustments you make to aeration, filtration or feeding.

Example answer

"I start each day by testing dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH and salinity with a YSI probe. I log readings in AquaManager and check them against the previous day's figures. If oxygen is trending low, I increase aeration and reduce feeding until levels stabilise. In sea cages, I also check current and weather forecasts because they affect oxygen and waste dispersal. I keep a record of every adjustment so the farm manager and I can review trends over time."

2. Tell me about a time you dealt with a disease outbreak or a significant stock health issue.

Why they ask

Biosecurity and disease control are critical, and employers want to see how you respond under pressure and follow protocols.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, the task (what you needed to achieve), the action you took (isolating stock, notifying the manager, applying treatments, recording), and the result (containing the issue, minimising losses).

Example answer

"In my previous role on a barramundi farm, we noticed unusual mortality in one pond. My task was to identify the cause and prevent spread. I immediately isolated the pond, stopped water transfer, and collected samples for the vet. I followed our biosecurity plan, disinfected equipment, and recorded all movements. The issue was diagnosed as a bacterial infection. We treated the pond and culled affected stock, which stopped the outbreak from reaching other ponds. I then revised our daily health check sheet to include early signs of the disease."

3. You are on night shift and notice a sudden drop in oxygen levels in a sea cage. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your ability to make quick decisions and follow emergency procedures when no one else is around.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess the situation, prioritise immediate actions, communicate, and document. Show you know when to escalate.

Example answer

"First, I would confirm the reading with a second probe to rule out equipment error. If the drop is real, I would turn on backup aeration immediately and check if any fish are gasping at the surface. I would call the farm manager straight away, even at night, because oxygen crashes can kill stock within hours. If directed, I would start a partial harvest or move fish to a better-oxygenated cage. Afterward, I would log the event, the actions taken, and the outcome so we could review the aeration setup and prevent it happening again."

4. How do you ensure your farm records meet aquaculture licence conditions and biosecurity requirements?

Why they ask

Farms are audited, and employers need someone who treats record keeping as part of the job, not an afterthought.

How to structure your answer

Process description: explain the types of records you keep (water quality, feeding, treatments, stock movements, mortality), how you keep them up to date, and how you prepare for audits.

Example answer

"I keep daily records in AquaManager and a backup spreadsheet in Excel. Every water quality check, feed batch, treatment and mortality event is logged with the date, time and staff initials. I also record stock movements between ponds or cages, because traceability matters if there is a disease issue. Before an audit, I print the relevant reports and cross-check them against our biosecurity plan and licence conditions. I flag any gaps to the farm manager immediately so we can fix them before the auditor arrives."

5. Describe your experience with automatic feeding systems and how you adjust feed rations.

Why they ask

Feeding is a major cost and affects growth and water quality, so employers want to know you can use the technology and make informed adjustments.

How to structure your answer

Technical walk-through: explain how you set the system, monitor feed intake, and adjust based on stock size, water temperature and health.

Example answer

"I have used automatic feeders on both pond and cage systems. I set the daily ration based on the feeding chart and stock biomass, then adjust it according to water temperature and observed feeding response. If fish are off their feed, I reduce the ration and check water quality, because low oxygen or disease will suppress appetite. I also calibrate the feeders weekly to make sure they are dispensing the correct amount, and I record every change so we can track feed conversion over time."

6. What steps do you take to manage safety when working on boats, with chemicals or around heavy equipment?

Why they ask

Aquaculture can be hazardous, and employers need to know you will follow safe work practices and speak up about risks.

How to structure your answer

List your safety routine: pre-start checks, personal protective equipment, risk assessments, and communication. Give an example of a risk you identified and how you controlled it.

Example answer

"Before any boat work, I check the weather, fuel, safety gear and communication devices. I always wear a life jacket and non-slip footwear. When handling chemicals, I follow the safety data sheet, wear gloves and eye protection, and make sure there is good ventilation. If I see a hazard, like a frayed rope or a leaking hydraulic hose, I tag it out and report it to the supervisor immediately. On one occasion, I noticed a slippery walkway near the feeding shed and organised a non-slip mat and extra drainage, which stopped a potential fall."