

# Beef Cattle Farmer interview questions

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## What to expect

Interviews for beef cattle farmer roles usually mix practical, technical and behavioural questions. Employers want to know you can handle stock safely, make sound decisions on herd health and pasture, and manage the business side of a farm. You might also be asked about compliance with NLIS and biosecurity rules.

- **Technical:** Questions about animal health, pasture management, breeding and livestock handling.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about teamwork, problem solving and past experience on a farm.
- **Scenario:** Questions about what you would do in a disease outbreak, weather emergency or equipment breakdown.
- **Safety:** Questions about worksite safety, including quad bike and cattle handling safety.
- **Business:** Questions about budgeting, record keeping and compliance with NLIS and LPA.

The process often starts with a phone or video call, then an on-farm interview where you may be asked to demonstrate low-stress cattle handling or walk through your experience. You might meet the owner, manager and sometimes other staff. Be ready to talk through your record keeping and how you handle seasonal pressures.

## 1. Tell me about your experience with calving and how you manage herd health during that period.

### Why they ask

Calving is a critical time for any beef operation, and employers want to know you can handle complications and keep calf loss low.

### How to structure your answer

Use a straightforward walk-through: describe the calving season, how you monitor cows, what interventions you use and how you record outcomes.

### Example answer

*"During calving I check the herd at least twice a day, looking for cows that are off on their own or showing signs of difficulty. If a cow is struggling, I intervene calmly and call the vet if needed. I keep a calving book and record any assisted births. After calving I make sure calves are tagged and mothered up, and I monitor for scours or pneumonia. Last season I reduced calf loss by keeping a close eye on first-calf heifers and making sure they had good pasture and shelter."*

## 2. How do you manage grazing rotations to keep pastures productive and cattle healthy?

### Why they ask

Pasture management is core to profitability and animal health.

### How to structure your answer

A technical explanation: describe your approach to rotation, rest periods, monitoring ground cover and adjusting stocking rates.

### Example answer

*"I use a rotational grazing system, moving cattle every few days depending on pasture growth. I check ground cover and do not let it drop below a certain level. I use AgriWebb to map paddocks and track grazing. In dry times I reduce stocking rates or supplementary feed. I also spell paddocks to let them recover. This has helped improve pasture persistence and reduced the need for hay."*

### **3. Describe a time you had to deal with a disease outbreak or unwell animal. What did you do?**

#### **Why they ask**

Herd health problems can be costly, and employers want to see you can act quickly and follow biosecurity rules.

#### **How to structure your answer**

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

#### **Example answer**

*"We had a case of pinkeye in a mob of weaners. I noticed several calves with weepy eyes and immediately drafted them into a smaller paddock. I treated them with eye ointment and consulted the vet for the best course of action. I also reduced dust by putting hay in feeders rather than on the ground. We monitored the mob daily and within a week the outbreak was under control. I recorded the treatment in my NLIS and farm records so we had a clear history."*

### **4. What would you do if you found a broken fence and cattle had escaped onto the road?**

#### **Why they ask**

This scenario tests safety, judgement and handling under pressure.

#### **How to structure your answer**

A judgement-under-pressure structure: prioritise safety, contain the situation, then fix the problem and review.

#### **Example answer**

*"First, I would make sure it is safe. I would call the police or local council if cattle are on a road, and warn traffic if possible. Then I would calmly muster the cattle back through the gap, using a bike or horse, and close the fence temporarily. Once the cattle are secure, I would repair the fence properly. After that, I would check why the fence broke and whether other parts of the boundary need attention. I would also record the incident and let neighbours know if needed."*

### **5. How do you keep your NLIS records and livestock traceability up to date?**

#### **Why they ask**

NLIS compliance is a legal requirement and buyers require it for market access.

#### **How to structure your answer**

A process explanation: describe your system, tools and how you ensure accuracy.

#### **Example answer**

*"I use the NLIS database for all movements. Every time cattle come onto the property or leave, I scan the tags and record the movement within the required time. I keep a backup of all PIC and LPA records. I also use AgriWebb to track individual animals and treatments. I train any staff on the correct procedure and do regular checks to make sure no tags are missed. This means we can trace any animal quickly if needed."*

### **6. This role involves long hours and seasonal pressure. How do you manage your time and look after yourself?**

#### **Why they ask**

Employers want to know you can handle the workload without burning out and that you will stay in the role.

#### **How to structure your answer**

A reflective answer: discuss your routines, support networks and how you prioritise tasks.

#### **Example answer**

*"I am used to long days, especially during calving and mustering. I plan my week around the weather and stock needs, and I make sure I take breaks when I can. I keep a list of jobs and prioritise animal welfare first. I also have a good network of neighbours and family who help during busy periods. I stay physically fit and get enough sleep when possible. I enjoy the work and I know that the busy times are balanced by quieter periods."*