

Dairy Farm Worker interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for dairy farm worker roles focus on practical ability, reliability and how you handle animals and equipment. You will likely talk to a farm owner, manager or herd manager, often on the farm itself.

- **Practical and technical:** Questions about milking routines, herd health, machinery and shed hygiene.
- **Safety and compliance:** How you follow animal welfare, food safety and workplace safety procedures.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of reliability, teamwork and handling sick animals.
- **Scenario and judgement:** What you would do if equipment fails, weather changes or an animal is injured.
- **Work ethic and availability:** Your ability to commit to early starts, long days and roster patterns.

The interview usually happens after a phone chat or a trial shift. You might be shown the shed, the herd and the equipment. Expect a mix of conversation and practical questions. Some farms ask you to demonstrate a task, such as putting cups on or moving cows. The interview often ends with a discussion about roster, pay and accommodation if the farm provides it.

1. Walk me through your routine for a morning milking.

Why they ask

This is a process question. The interviewer wants to see you know the steps and can work efficiently without cutting corners.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through. Start with preparation before the herd arrives, then the milking sequence, then cleaning and recording.

Example answer

"I arrive about half an hour before milking to check the plant, set up cups and make sure the yard is clean. When the cows come in, I bring them up quietly and let them settle. I put cups on, check for mastitis and watch the flow. After milking, I clean the plant, hose the yard and record any cows treated or drafted. The whole routine takes about two hours for 400 cows."

2. Tell me about a time you noticed a cow was unwell. What did you do?

Why they ask

This is a behavioural question. They want to hear how you spot illness early and follow farm procedure.

How to structure your answer

STAR. Situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"Last spring I was bringing the herd in for afternoon milking and noticed one cow lagging behind and off her feed. I drafted her into the hospital pen and checked her temperature. I told the herd manager, and we treated her for mastitis. I recorded the treatment in DairyComp 305 and monitored her for three days. She recovered and went back to the main herd."

3. You are milking and the plant loses vacuum. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a scenario question. It tests your judgement under pressure and your knowledge of the milking system.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure. Stop, assess, follow procedure, report, record.

Example answer

"I would stop milking immediately and switch off the plant to avoid injuring the cows. I would check for a blockage or a loose connection, and if I could not fix it quickly I would call the farm manager. I would record the time and the issue, and once fixed I would check the vacuum level before restarting. If any cows were affected I would note them for a health check."

4. How do you ensure you meet animal welfare and food safety standards in the shed?

Why they ask

This is a technical and compliance question. They want to see you understand the standards and apply them daily.

How to structure your answer

Explain your understanding, give examples, show habits.

Example answer

"I follow the farm's animal welfare policy and the food safety plan. That means handling cows calmly, using low-stress stockmanship, and never leaving a cow in the race for too long. I clean teats properly before cups go on, use gloves when treating, and keep the shed and yards clean. I also check withholding periods and record any treatments so milk does not go into the vat."

5. This role involves early starts, long days and work in all weather. How do you stay reliable?

Why they ask

This is a work ethic question. They want to know you will turn up and handle the conditions.

How to structure your answer

Honest and specific. Give a routine and past evidence.

Example answer

"I am used to early starts. I get my gear ready the night before and go to bed early. On my last farm I did the 4am milking six days a week for two years and only missed one shift because of a family emergency. I bring wet weather gear and spare clothes so I can keep working. I know dairy work is physical and the weather can be rough, but I prefer being outdoors."

6. Describe your experience with farm machinery like tractors or ATVs.

Why they ask

This is a technical skills question. They want to know if you can operate equipment safely and do basic maintenance.

How to structure your answer

List machines, describe tasks, show safety and maintenance awareness.

Example answer

"I have operated a 90-horsepower tractor for feeding out and paddock maintenance, and I use an ATV for moving cows and checking fences. I always do a pre-start check on fluids, tyres and guards. I hold a current driver licence and have completed a quad bike safety course. I can do basic maintenance like greasing and checking oil, and I report bigger issues to the manager."