

Farrier interview questions

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What to expect

Farrier interviews usually combine a practical assessment with a conversation about your experience, horse handling and client manner. Employers want to see that you can work safely around horses, forge and fit shoes to a high standard, and manage the business side of a visiting round.

- **Practical assessment:** A supervised session at a forge or stable where you trim, shape a shoe and fit it under observation.
- **Technical knowledge:** Questions on hoof balance, gait assessment, common hoof conditions and shoe selection.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of handling difficult horses, managing clients and solving problems on the road.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain hoof care and nutrition to owners, including when they disagree with your advice.
- **Safety and WHS:** Your approach to working with hot metal, sharp tools and unpredictable horses.
- **Business and logistics:** For self-employed or contract roles, how you schedule clients, travel and keep records.

A typical farrier interview starts with a phone or video screen covering your qualifications, apprenticeship and availability. If you progress, you attend a working interview or practical assessment where you trim and shoe a horse while the employer or head farrier watches. That is followed by a sit-down conversation with the owner, trainer or practice manager, covering horse handling, client communication and how you organise your round. Some employers ask for references from stables or trainers you have worked with.

1. Walk me through how you trim and shoe a horse from start to finish.

Why they ask

This is a process question that tests your routine, safety habits and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: pick up and assess the hoof, trim and balance, select or forge the shoe, fit and nail, finish and check gait. Mention safety checks at each stage.

Example answer

"I start by picking up each hoof and assessing the shape, sole and any cracks or bruising. Then I use hoof nippers and a rasp to trim and balance the hoof, checking the angle against the opposite side. If the horse needs shoes, I either select a ready-made shoe or forge one from steel, shaping it on the anvil to match the hoof. I fit the shoe, nail it, and clinch the nails. Finally I check the horse's gait at a walk and trot, and make any adjustments. Throughout, I keep the horse calm and watch for signs of discomfort, and I keep my tools and the area safe for both of us."

2. Tell me about a time you handled a difficult or nervous horse during shoeing.

Why they ask

Behavioural question to see how you manage risk and horse welfare under pressure.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result. Focus on the horse's behaviour, your handling approach and the outcome.

Example answer

"A young thoroughbred I was shoeing for the first time was very nervous and kept pulling its hoof away. I needed to get the job done without stressing the horse or risking injury. I took my time, used a calm voice, and worked in short stages, letting the horse relax between each hoof. I asked the owner to hold the horse steady and I avoided sudden movements. By the end, the horse stood quietly for three of the four hooves, and the owner booked me for the next cycle. The horse improved each visit after that."

3. A client's horse has recurring lameness and the owner is unsure about changing the shoeing. How would you assess and advise?

Why they ask

Scenario question testing judgement, technical knowledge and client communication.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: gather information (history, gait, hoof shape), consider options, explain clearly, and respect the owner's decision while prioritising the horse's welfare.

Example answer

"First I would watch the horse walk and trot on a hard surface, and ask the owner about the history and what the vet has said. Then I would examine the hooves for balance, cracks, bruising or signs of poor shoeing. I might suggest a different shoe type, a change in trimming cycle, or a referral to a vet or equine podiatrist. I would explain my reasoning in plain terms and give the owner options, including costs and expected outcomes. If the owner did not want to change, I would document my advice and continue to monitor the horse, because the horse's welfare comes first."

4. What is your approach to forging a custom shoe for a horse with an unusual gait or hoof conformation?

Why they ask

Technical question on forge skills and problem solving.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation: assess the hoof and gait, decide on shoe type and material, forge and fit, then check movement. Mention tools like the forge, anvil and nippers.

Example answer

"I start by watching the horse move and examining the hoof shape and any uneven wear. Then I decide on the shoe design, for example a wider web for support or a rolled toe to ease breakover. I heat a steel bar in the forge and shape it on the anvil, using hammers and tongs to draw out the toe or add a rocker. I check the fit against the hoof, adjusting with the rasp and nippers, then nail it on. After fitting, I watch the horse walk and trot again to make sure the gait has improved. If not, I remove the shoe and adjust further."

5. How do you manage your schedule and travel between clients as a self-employed farrier?

Why they ask

Process and business question for a visiting round.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through of your booking system, route planning, communication with clients and how you handle cancellations or emergencies.

Example answer

"I keep a booking system on my phone, with each client's address and the horse's shoeing cycle. I group clients by area so I am not driving across the region every day. I confirm appointments the day before, and I leave buffer time for horses that take longer or for emergency calls. If a client cancels, I

offer their slot to someone on my waiting list or use it for paperwork and sharpening tools. I also keep records of each horse's hooves and any changes, so I can track progress over time."

6. Describe a time you had to explain hoof care or nutrition to a client who was skeptical.

Why they ask

Client-facing behavioural question on advisory skills.

How to structure your answer

STAR, with emphasis on how you listened, explained in plain terms, provided evidence or examples, and maintained the relationship.

Example answer

"A client with a pony that kept getting hoof abscesses did not believe that diet was part of the problem. I listened to their concerns, then explained how rich pasture and excess sugar can affect hoof health. I showed them photos of the hoof from previous visits and suggested a simple change to lower-sugar hay and a balanced supplement. I also recommended a shorter trimming cycle. The client was still unsure, so I said we could trial it for two months and review. The abscesses stopped recurring, and the client later thanked me and recommended me to others at their agistment."