

Interviewing Apprentice Candidates



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Finding an Apprentice who will be a good fit for your farm is important and may take some time. You will not only be working side by side with your Apprentice day after day, but will be training him or her how to manage your farm. Don't be discouraged if you don't find someone right away.

General Guidelines

- A job interview is a two-way process. You and the Apprentice candidate are assessing each other to make sure this position is a good fit.
- Plan on spending a couple of hours for the initial interview and have plenty of time to let the discussion go where it leads you. That's how you learn about each other.
- Start by telling the candidate about yourself and your farm or, better yet, give them a tour.
- Share a job description if you have developed one and ask if they have any questions about it.
- Prepare a set of questions and make sure you ask all candidates these same questions, so you can better compare them. You can ask more and different questions of different candidates, but make sure you at least ask your standard questions of everyone you're considering.

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Interview questions: suggestions and what you cannot legally ask

- 1) Ask a question about their goals in applying for the Apprenticeship. What are their long-term career goals?
- 2) Ask them a general question about the skills and experience they would bring to the job. Have them introduce themselves. Even if you've read their resume, listening to how they describe themselves can tell you a lot about a person.
- 3) Ask questions about how they deal with challenges and opportunities, such as:
 - a. *Tell me about a job or task you have had that you didn't like. What didn't you like about it and how did you deal with it?*
 - b. *Tell me about a job you really enjoyed and why you liked it.*
 - c. *What was the most valuable feedback you received on a job and what did you do about it?*
- 4) Ask some questions that will help you understand how they will get along with others, such as:
 - a. *If I asked a previous employer about you, what would they tell me?*
 - b. *Have you ever been in a situation with a co-worker who you found hard to get along with? How did you deal with it?*

Interview questions: suggestions and what you cannot legally ask, cont.

- 5) Ask questions that tell you how they will approach learning new tasks, such as:
 - a. *Tell me about something new that you learned to do in the past and how you went about learning that new skill.*
 - b. *Have you ever helped someone learn to do a new task? How did you go about it?*
- 6) Ask specific questions about the kinds of tasks they will be expected to do, such as:
 - c. *Describe your experience working with livestock. What do you look for to detect a calf that is sick?*
 - d. *Describe your experience working with and maintaining equipment. Can you operate a skidsteer? Can you back a truck with a trailer?*
- 7) Describe your farm's working conditions, days, hours a day, and flexibility of the schedule and ask them if they are able to work that schedule.
- 8) **Do not ask specific questions about an individual's age, race, religion, politics, family, marital status, or if they have children. Other kinds of questions may help you learn about the candidate's personality, interests and goals. Consider instead asking some of the following:**
 - e. *If another employee is sick, would you be able to fill in on short notice?*
 - f. *Do you have a reliable method of getting to work?*
 - g. *What do you like to do in your spare time?*
 - h. *What are your hobbies and interests?*
 - i. *What movies, books or music do you enjoy?*
 - j. *How soon would you be able to start if offered the position?*
- 9) Give the candidate a chance to ask questions of you. You can learn a lot about a candidate from what kinds of questions they ask.
- 10) At the end of the interview, let them know what your decision-making process will be and if there are any follow-up interview steps, such as coming out and working for a weekend.