

Q1. What problem does Rancher solve in DevOps or infrastructure?

A: Rancher addresses a specific concern - provisioning, configuration management, orchestration, or CI/CD - by automating manual steps that are error-prone, slow, or not reproducible when done by hand.

Q2. What is Rancher's core architecture?

A: Rancher has a control plane that stores desired state and a data plane (agents or push-based SSH) that enforces it. Understanding this distinction clarifies where configuration is evaluated and where changes are applied.

Q3. How does Rancher define infrastructure or configuration as code?

A: Rancher uses declarative files (YAML, HCL, or a DSL) to express desired state. A plan/diff phase shows what will change before applying. Version-controlling these files enables peer review and rollback.

Q4. How does Rancher ensure idempotency?

A: Rancher operations are designed to produce the same result when run multiple times. Applying the same config twice converges to the desired state rather than creating duplicate resources. This makes automation safe to re-run.

Q5. How do you handle secrets in Rancher?

A: Secrets should never be stored in plain text in Rancher config files. Use a secrets backend (Vault, AWS Secrets Manager) and inject values at runtime via environment variables or encrypted vaults supported by the tool.

Q6. How does Rancher integrate with CI/CD pipelines?

A: CI/CD pipelines call Rancher in automated steps: plan on a pull request to preview changes and apply on merge to main. Approval gates can require a human to review the plan before changes go to production.

Q7. How do you debug a failed Rancher deployment?

A: Check Rancher's logs for the specific error message and the resource that failed. For infrastructure tools, re-run with increased verbosity (-v, --debug). Review the state file or event history to understand what changed before the failure.

Q8. What are security best practices for Rancher?

A: Rotate credentials used by Rancher, restrict network access to its control plane, enable audit logging of all operations, and use least-privilege service accounts. Never run Rancher with admin credentials in production.

Q9. How does Rancher scale for large environments?

A: Large Rancher deployments use workspaces or namespaces to isolate environments, remote state backends for team collaboration, and modular code to avoid a single monolithic config that is slow to plan/apply.

Q10. What are common mistakes teams make when adopting Rancher?

A: Common pitfalls include storing secrets in plain text config, skipping the plan step before apply, not reviewing state drift, and not having a rollback strategy when a deployment fails partway through.