

Proudly Presenting ...

Agriculture





Have you ever been asked a question about agriculture that you didn't know how to answer? Read a media report that wasn't accurate? Been asked to volunteer at a local event to promote agriculture or to host a farm tour?

“Proudly Presenting ... Agriculture”

was made to provide tips and advice to help you with experiences like these!

Less than 2% of Canadians farm, making it important for those of us in agriculture to work hard to explain what we do. We have a lot of good news to tell the other 98% of the population and any opportunity to share is worth it!

Being an ambassador for agriculture does not have to mean wearing a sash and a crown or touring a group of teachers through your farm. Anytime that you are talking about agriculture to people who have not yet heard the good news stories, you are being an ambassador for the industry! Telling people about your experiences, answering questions, making presentations, talking with the media and running farm tours are all things you can do.





Getting the Message Out

In 2006, 52% of Canadians acknowledged they knew very little or nothing about agriculture. The need to bridge the gap between the farm and the consumer continues to grow. Here are some important messages to focus your efforts.

- **Canadian farmers are world leaders in food safety, animal care and the environment.**
- **Agriculture is a responsible and professional industry.**
- **Family farms remain the backbone of Canadian agriculture.**

Farmers are committed to animal care, 365 days a year.

- Farmers are hard working, honest, friendly people who believe in the humane and responsible care of animals.
- Caring for animals is a major part of our livelihoods - this takes long hours and a genuine interest in animals. Examples: On-farm Animal Care Assessments.

Safe food starts on our farms.

- Farmers provide abundant, wholesome, safe, affordable food.
- As farmers, we are very aware of the importance of providing consumers with safe, high quality food. We eat the same food they do. Example: Quality Assurance Programs and Livestock Medicine Courses.

Farmers are active environmentalists.

- We live, work, and play on our farm, and how we treat the environment affects us and our families directly, today and in the future. Examples: Environmental Farm Plans and Grower Pesticide Safety Course.





How?

When you're talking with someone ...

- ✓ **Be yourself.** Talk about what you know. Use examples from your farm or experience. Offer to find the answers that you are unsure of.
- ✓ **Be patient, positive and proud.**
- ✓ **Be prepared.** Keep a record of common and not so common questions. Research the answers.
- ✓ **Keep it short and simple.** Avoid using industry jargon and technical detailed explanations.
- ✓ **Broaden understanding.** Always explain why things are done, not just how.
- ✓ **Put it into perspective.** Compare the past and the present or draw parallels to everyday urban life to help people see a clearer picture.
- ✓ **Talk to kids.** Encourage children to ask questions and provide answers that both they and adults can understand.
- ✓ **Respect others' opinions.** Avoid preaching or trying to convert people. Your goal is to educate and inform!
- ✓ **Show you care.** Make sure people understand how much you care about the topic before you get into detailed explanations.

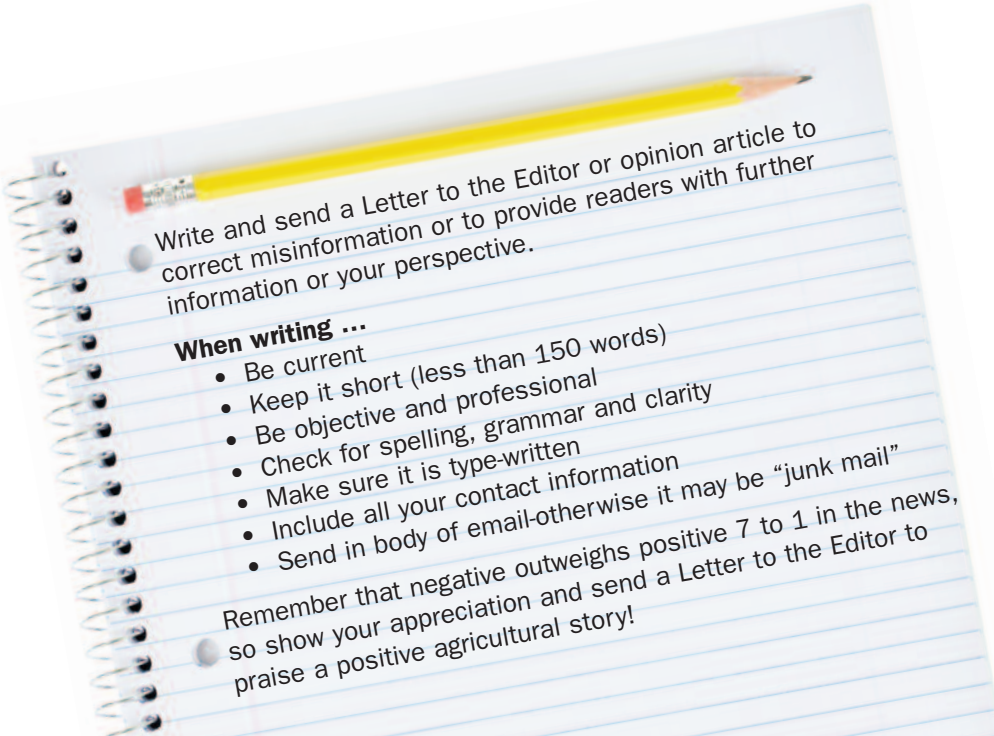
When making a presentation ...

- ✓ **Know your audience.** Plan your activities and messages to suit who you're talking to.
- ✓ **Pick a Message.** Make your presentation memorable with a key message. If you are talking to students, think about what kids will tell their parents when they go home.
- ✓ **Remember your purpose.** What are three things you want the audience to remember?
- ✓ **Don't try to cram too much in!** The biggest challenge in agricultural education is to streamline messages and information.

Remember, we can't give people a lifetime experience of the farm in a 10-minute presentation!

When you're dealing with the media ...

- ✓ **Keep up to date with farm issues in the news.** These issues generate questions.
- ✓ **Know who you are talking to** and keep a record of media contacts.
- ✓ **Avoid doing an interview immediately.** Offering to return the call or setting an appointment allows you to collect your thoughts.
- ✓ **Respect deadlines** - a missed deadline is a missed opportunity.
- ✓ **Be honest, direct, brief and concise.**
- ✓ **Ensure you have the latest facts.** Don't guess. Follow up with facts you didn't know or information you didn't have.
- ✓ **Remember** that there is no such thing as "off the record".
- ✓ **Build relationships with local media.** Keep in touch and offer story ideas!
- ✓ **Refer them ...**
 - to Farm & Food Care Ontario (www.farmfoodcare.org or www.farmissues.com) for questions related to farm animals, crops and the environment.
 - to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (www.omafra.gov.on.ca) for general questions on food and farming



Write and send a Letter to the Editor or opinion article to correct misinformation or to provide readers with further information or your perspective.

When writing ...

- Be current
- Keep it short (less than 150 words)
- Be objective and professional
- Check for spelling, grammar and clarity
- Make sure it is type-written
- Include all your contact information
- Send in body of email-otherwise it may be "junk mail"

Remember that negative outweighs positive 7 to 1 in the news, so show your appreciation and send a Letter to the Editor to praise a positive agricultural story!

When you're running a farm tour ...

- ✓ **Choose your audience.** Farm tours are excellent learning opportunities for students, youth groups, reporters and government officials, but not all at the same time.
- ✓ **Promote a positive image.** Be proud of who you are and what you do! Keep facilities clean and in good repair. Be conscious of what people may see or take pictures of.
- ✓ **Only speak on what you know.** Offer to find answers or refer questions you're not sure about.
- ✓ **Make it relevant and understandable.** Talk in terms that your visitors will understand and use examples that are relevant to their experiences.
- ✓ **Ensure your farm is free of hazards.** Contact the Farm Safety Association (www.fsai.on.ca) for tips and advice.
- ✓ **Make it memorable!** Remember that for many visitors this may be their first (and only) opportunity to see a farm. What do you want them to remember?



Unable to tour people through your farm or barns? No problem! Use Farm & Food Care's virtual farm tours instead. They're available on a CD or online at www.virtualfarmtours.ca.

When you want to do something more ...

- ✓ **Distribute and promote agricultural** resources in your area. For example, call the Farm & Food Care office for copies of resources to drop off at your community library.
- ✓ **Give a presentation about farming** to a classroom or local group, such as the Chamber of Commerce or a service club.
- ✓ **Join** Farm & Food Care's Ambassador team and volunteer at public events (such as the Canadian National Exhibition and The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair) with Farm & Food Care's displays.
- ✓ **Volunteer** at local events that profile agriculture, such as fairs or Agriculture in the Classroom events.
- ✓ **Attend** a Farm & Food Care Ambassador Workshop to learn more about how to represent agriculture effectively. Bring your friends!

Check out Farm & Food Care's resources for tips on setting up your own displays and more at www.farmfoodcare.org in the Farm & Food Resources section.

Contact the Farm & Food Care office for more information.

On behalf of the Canadian farming community, thank you for your dedication and keen interest in effectively representing agriculture. Know that your contributions to learning are both tremendous and valued. We hope that this brochure inspires you and provides helpful tips to ensure success in "Proudly Presenting ... Agriculture for years to come."

Whether you are hosting a farm tour, writing a letter to your local newspaper or simply standing in line at the grocery store talking to a stranger about locally grown food, here are 10 tips to follow to ensure you are being an effective ambassador for agriculture:

10 TIPS

- 1 Be positive. Think customer service with a smile!
- 2 Know who you're talking to and what their concerns are.
- 3 Be prepared. Keep up to date with issues in the media.
- 4 Use easy to understand words and explanations, not industry jargon.
- 5 Provide comparisons that your audience can relate to.
- 6 Use examples from your farm or your experience when answering questions, instead of guessing or generalizing.
- 7 Show you care. Really.
- 8 When answering a question, "I don't know" is a valid answer. Refer them to someone else when appropriate.
- 9 Invite discussion, avoid debates and confrontations. Everyone is entitled to their opinion.
- 10 Remember, you may be the only person in agriculture someone ever has the chance to meet. Make that impression memorable!



Don't forget, as an ambassador for agriculture, you are ***always*** on duty!



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