

HOW TO BE AN AMBASSADOR FOR AGRICULTURE



AGRICULTURAL AMBASSADOR BASICS

How to be a Good Ambassador

The most effective and memorable exhibits include enthusiastic and informative volunteers. Agriculture has a lot of good stories to share with the public. Events like local fairs and farm tours provide a great opportunity to do that. It is important to correct misinformation by taking a positive, proactive and professional approach. Tell your story with pride.

If we don't tell the story of modern agriculture to the public, who will? This section will provide you with some approaches for being an effective ambassador for agriculture.

- Learn all you can about your sector of the industry and the criticisms against it. Keeping up with issues affecting your interests and other sectors of the industry is an ongoing process.
- Think critically, and encourage critical thinking in all those you speak to. The key concept is to provide factual information to allow the individual to form their own opinions. Encourage questions such as: What is the source of your information? Is it a credible source of information on that topic? What is the agenda/goals of the source?
- By asking the right questions, you can get the visitor thinking critically about things they have seen or "read somewhere". This approach is far more effective than lecturing a person on the importance of agriculture. The learning process shows that allowing someone to reach their own conclusions is always the most effective.
- Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Be open minded and objective when encountering ideas that differ from yours. Try to remain positive and provide that individual with the facts about your industry. Your objective as an Agricultural Ambassador is to build understanding and appreciation. You are not a salesperson.
- Remember, you cannot change a belief, and you cannot reach everyone. Don't preach to the converted. Learn to recognize people with preformed ideas and don't waste your time trying to change their mind when it is open to new information.



IMPORTANT MESSAGES

There is a saying that farmers do a great job of producing food, but a lousy job of telling people about it. Below are some hints of where to start.

- Identify your audience, and then get to know them. Casual conversations help to identify areas of public interest or concern. Don't devote time or resources to information the public doesn't want to receive. Find ways to tie them into the things they are interested in.
- Choose your messages carefully. Be consistent and repeat key ideas.
- Keep it simple. Make it relevant and understandable. Use examples to help get your point across.

The Most Effective Activities Are Those That Reinforce the Following Ideas:

- Farmers are hard working, honest, friendly people who believe in the humane and responsible care of animals.
- Canadian farmers provide abundant, wholesome, safe, affordable food.
- Agriculture is a responsible and professional industry.
- Family farms are the backbone of Canadian agriculture.

Specific Areas of Interest:

- High standards of inspection for animal and crop products.
- Stewards of the land and environment; Environmental Farm Plans are examples of proactive, responsible environmental action.
- Excellent levels of animal care; continuous research in animal welfare to help us determine the best methods available; Recommended Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals.



LIVE ANIMAL DISPLAY GUIDELINES

Farm animals or pets? It's very important to convey the message that farm animals should not be considered pets. It's often difficult for people who are not from farm backgrounds to understand how livestock farmers can care for farm animals and then ultimately use them for food.

Many visitors will relate to pets, and will compare the farm animals on display to pets or even people. If you take a minute to think of normal production practices such as separating dairy calves from cows, castration, weaning and marketing ages, and tail docking you will see how it might disturb someone who thinks of the animal in human or pet terms.

"How would you like to live like that?" and "You would be charged with cruelty if you kept your dog like that" are two examples that illustrate those attitudes.

This leaves you with a dilemma of educating the public about agriculture and entertaining them at the same time. A good compromise is to set up a separate area with animals that are chosen for their gentle temperament.

- Goats and sheep work well. Geese, rabbits, and chickens are generally not suitable.
- Do not allow visitors in with the animals if an attendant is not available. Only allow a limited number of visitors in with supervision. Insurance, health, and safety issues all need to be weighed against the benefits of allowing people in with the animals.
- **The ideal set up is a fenced in area where people can reach in to pet the animals that want the attention. Put a 'barn' or a straw wall up in the middle where the animals can get away from the crowds.**
- The maximum length of time an animal should be on display is 8 hours or less, depending on factors such as crowds and temperatures. Any animals showing signs of stress or illness should be removed immediately.
- Rotate animals out of the area on a regular basis.
- Pens and animals should be kept very clean.
- Do not allow people to pick up the animals.
- Make sure a regular feeding program is in place, above and beyond the 'kids feeding pellets in a cone' idea. **This is critical to ensure that larger animals that aren't as 'cute' get enough feed.**



INTERACTIVE FUN: FARM TRIVIA

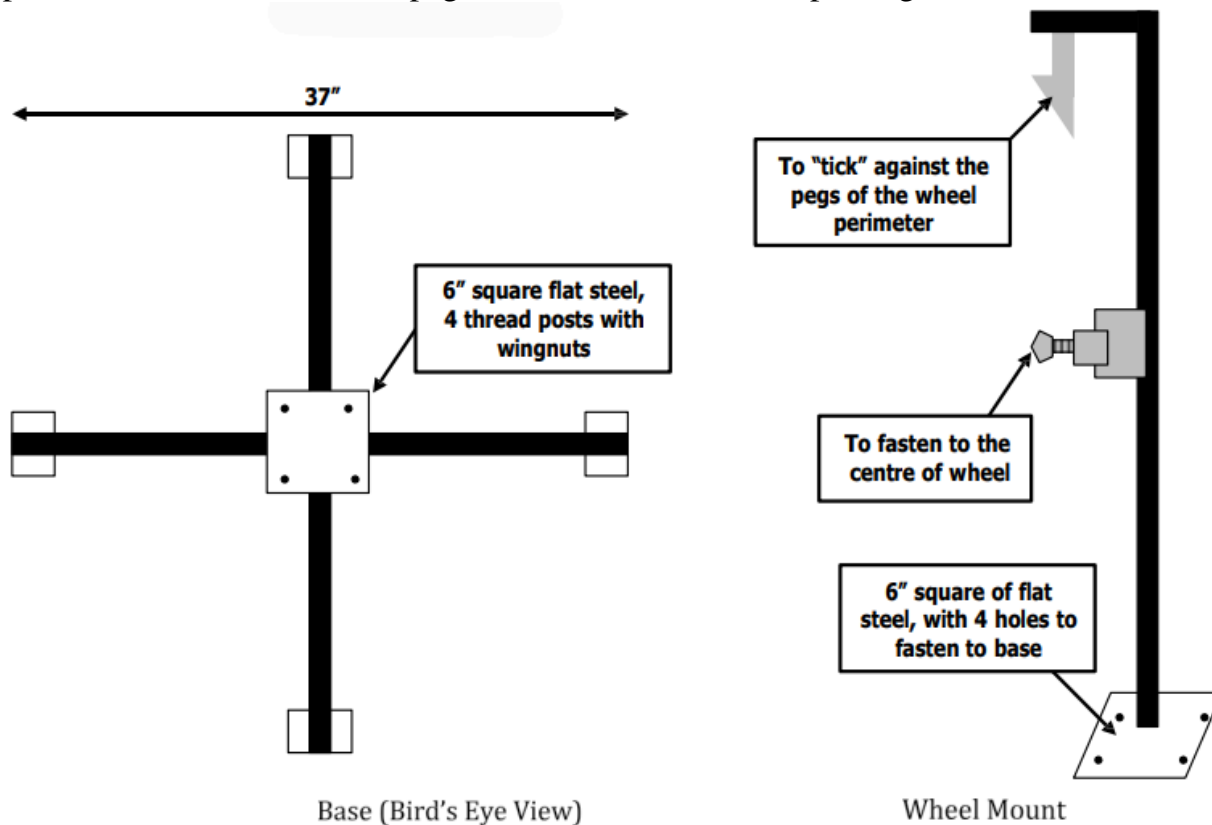
To teach children (and by extension, adults!) about crops and farm animals by asking them age appropriate trivia questions.

- A trivia wheel (see instructions below) or other category selection system - be creative!
 - An index card box & index cards
 - Trivia questions
 - An eager volunteer to ask questions at the trivia wheel
 - Small prizes
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- **WARNING:** This activity is VERY popular and requires an energetic volunteer!
 - Crouching down to child-level will help you seem less intimidating to shyer children.
 - This activity is not meant to be a test!
 - Give hints, or encourage children to get hints from older siblings or parents.



Create your own!

- Use a mounted bicycle tire as a replacement for the wooden wheel.
- Use a large dice with each face representing a different category,
- Sew extra pockets to an old pair of overalls and place cards representing the categories in each pocket.
- Important Considerations:
 - The wheel should be sturdy enough it won't tip over.
- Materials
 - 1/2" plywood
 - 1 1/4" tube steel (indicated by black in the diagram below)
 - 1/8" flat steel (indicated by white in the diagram below)
 - 28 bolts / wooden pegs
 - Scrap rubber or wood to make a "ticker"
 - Paint or a sign to divide the wheel into category sections
- Components
 - Wheel: 30" circle cut from 3/4" plywood, 3/4" hole in the centre, 28-1/4" holes around the perimeter with bolts/wooden pegs in them as handles for spinning.



GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

As a Canadian farmer, I am a world leader in food safety, animal care and the environment.

I am committed to animal care, 365 days a year.

Caring for our animals is a major part of our livelihoods; this requires long hours and a genuine interest in animals.

Examples: Recommended Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Livestock, Farm & Food Care Ontario's Animal Care Helpline.

We're in business with the earth.

We live, work, and play on our farm, and how we treat the environment affects us directly today and tomorrow.

Examples: Environmental Farm Plans, Nutrient Management Plans, Grower Pesticide Safety Course.

Food quality assurance starts on our farm.

As farmers, we are very aware of the importance of providing you with safe, high quality food. We eat the same food you do.

Examples: Quality Assurance Programs, Livestock Medicines Courses, medication registration and withdrawal periods, strict meat inspection standards.



Did you know?

- In 1900 one farmer fed 10 people. Today one farmer feeds over 120 people.
- In 1931, 1 in 3 Canadians lived on a farm; today it's only 1 in 46.
- Over 98% of Canadian farms are family owned and operated and often handed down from generation to generation.
- In the past 10 years, we've reduced the use of pesticides by almost 30%.
- One out of seven jobs in Canada is related to agriculture and food.
- In 1900 Canadians spent 50 cents of every dollar on food, compared to only 10.6 cents today.

10 Tips for Agricultural Ambassadors

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 just industry jargon.
5. Provide comparisons your audience can relate to.
6. Use examples from your farm or your experience when answering questions, instead of guessing or generalizing.
7. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Invite discussion, avoid debates and confrontations.
8. When answering a question, "I don't know" is a valid answer. Refer them to someone else when appropriate.
9. Show you care. Really.
10. Remember, you may be the only person in agriculture someone ever has the chance to meet. Make that first impression memorable.



EDUCATIONAL LIVE ANIMAL DISPLAYS

Animals naturally attract people to the exhibit area and promote discussion. These forums can help clarify misinformation and address concerns, so it is important to provide an accurate portrayal of modern animal agriculture to the public.

Make it Real

Display farm animals in their regular housing. Do not foster or generate misconceptions by using inappropriate settings. People see negative and/or inaccurate images of farming in the media all the time. The industry should be open about our practices and the rationale behind them. This is agriculture's chance to show how things are really done, but do not forget to include an explanation why. Misconceptions often emerge from fact, so farmers have to take every opportunity to explain the rationale behind modern practices to help bridge the gap between farm and fork.

Signage is Important

Label everything, including the age and breed of the animals. Do not assume that your audience will know a cow is a cow, and not a pony. Be as specific as you can without being confusing. Do not oversimplify by simply stating "COW" -- Is it a dairy cow or a beef cow, a male or female, and what is the approximate age? Explain the role of the animal: meat or milk; and what it eats, production methods, and equipment. If you include specific terms, be sure to define them.

Farm Animals are not pets or people

Avoid giving human-like characteristics to your animals. This is critical when trying to explain issues such as separating calves from cows and at what age they reach market weight. Use pedigree names if appropriate. If the animal on display does not have a name, do not give it one; instead explain it has a number and what the number represents. Replace signs which say "Hello, my name is Suzy and I eat hay." with "This young female cow is a beef breed called 'Charolais', due to have a calf in 2 months."



The following is a list of suggestions for animal presentations. Although the animals are there for public education, their wellbeing should not be jeopardized. Human and animal safety are top priorities. Your job is to minimize stress, injuries, and animal aggression.

- **People:** Keep in mind who your visitors will be. Assume they have little or no experience with farm animals. People will walk up directly behind animals or put their fingers in pens and cages to pet or feed them. Even the quietest animal can only tolerate this for so long before they start to bite, kick, or peck in defence. Prepare for this by planning where you want people to walk and to have access to the animals. Use ropes, barriers, and double penning to control access to the animals.
- **Access to the animals:** Signs and volunteers should discourage visitors from feeding, petting, or picking up the animals. Young animals, like piglets and chicks, seem to be the most inviting.

Examples

- “In the interest of animal health and safety, please do not feed the animals.”
- “Be careful ~ this animal may bite”.
- **Quiet animals:** Use animals that are accustomed to human interaction. Animals should be kept as calm and unstressed as possible. Show animals and 4-H projects are often used in these exhibits. Keep in mind these animals should be representative of what you would see on a working farm.
- **Delivery:** Animals should arrive at the location ahead of the event's opening. This will allow the animals time to acclimatize to new surroundings.
- **Animal health:** A sick animal reflects badly on the exhibit, the home farm, and on agriculture in general. If any animals begin to show signs of illness or stress, they should be removed immediately and/or returned home for care. Have a plan in place in case an animal gets sick or dies, including a pen or cage out of public view, an emergency list of phone numbers with a veterinarian and a transporter who could come on short notice. You should always have someone “on-duty” around animals. It does not take long for something to go wrong and someone should be nearby to deal with any problems that could arise.
- **Code of Practice:** Pen size, stocking density, and food and water requirements should meet the guidelines set out in the Recommended Code of Practice for each animal. There are now Recommended Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of the following animals: poultry, dairy, beef, horses, sheep, pigs, veal, deer, fur, bison, goats, and more. These do not necessarily need to be on hand, but should be used as a reference. Copies of the Recommended Code of Practice can be accessed online at www.nfacc.ca.



- **Pens:** Keep animals in appropriate pens. Use strong penning with no sharp edges that will keep animals in and humans out. Separate different types of animals and provide plenty of space. The Ole' McDonald's farm atmosphere is created if a number of different animals are close to each other or all in the same pen which does not reflect a modern farm. There is a reason animals are segregated and the public should be aware of them.
 - **Feed and Water:** Always have a constant supply of water available whenever possible. If pails are used, they should be secured to avoid spillage. Visitor complaints about animals on display are most frequently about the animals having no feed or water. Set up displays of what each animal eats, how often, and in what quantity each day.
 - **Bedding:** Use similar bedding methods to those on the farm. If conditions require no bedding, explain why. Keep pens clean and dry by removing urine soaked bedding and manure frequently each day.



MANAGING DISRUPTIONS AT EVENTS

Many special interest groups advocate direct actions such as civil disobedience and demonstrations to attract publicity. The rationale behind these actions includes: raising consciousness of the issues, promoting consumer boycotts of animal products and increasing membership and support for their respective organizations. Livestock shows and auctions that attract large numbers of people and media representatives are prime targets. To date, there have been few protests at events in Ontario. Events in rural areas have been contacted by animal rights groups for display space.

Designate at least one individual on the organizing committee as a media spokesperson and a crisis management organizer. Ensure that this person is well known to exhibitors and volunteers in the event that difficulties arise.

Four General Rules to Follow for Disruptive Situations

1. **Prepare for the Worst**

- Secure your physical environment and train appropriate volunteers in crisis management.

2. **Familiarize yourself with appropriate security and law enforcement authorities.**

- Keep them informed of events that might attract disruptions.

3. **Avoid Confrontation**

- Your goal is to limit demonstrators' media exposure and prevent them from reaching a large audience with their messages.

4. **Stay Positive**

- Your goal is to limit demonstrators' media exposure and prevent them from reaching a large audience with their messages.



Other Tips:

- The primary goal is to minimize publicity.
- Ask anyone who disagrees with animal care or agricultural practices in general to state their concerns in writing to the organizing committee or to Farm & Food Care Ontario.
- If demonstrators are trespassing, work with security to remove them unobtrusively. "Manhandling" demonstrators guarantees media coverage for the wrong cause.
- Consider pre-empting media coverage with a special event such as a charity benefit or contest. Turn the disruption into a positive action where possible. An example would be the k.d. lang 'Meat stinks' campaign. One radio station gave out free steaks to the first listener who called in after a k.d. lang song played.
- Train youth and other exhibitors in how to react. (See the "I Care" program.) Ask them not to respond to demonstrators and to refer reporters to the designated spokesperson. It is important that these situations are dealt with promptly and professionally.
- If an activist becomes disruptive and you cannot have them legally removed, take a break rather than give them a forum to continue.
- If an animal rights group sets up an exhibit at your event, the best tactic is to situate them in an obscure area and ignore them. Do a great job of pointing people towards the agriculture exhibits.
- After the event, meet with everyone involved to deal with concerns and evaluate the experience.

Sample Media Statements

"We respect the right of these groups to voice their opinions. That is part of Canadian culture.

However, this event is also part of Canada's agricultural tradition, and we strongly disagree with these misguided attempts to disrupt and discredit the efforts of our farmers."

"It's a shame that some people who disagree with a valuable program like 4-H are attempting to disrupt them and manipulate the public for their own political agenda."



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Possible Situations:

- Individuals who attend (prior and during the show) to gather incriminating evidence.
 - Vulnerable areas include: loading ramps, animal holding pens, animal handling facilities (such as fitting areas), display pens, show ring staging areas, controversial displays.
- Individuals (alone or in groups) who ask sensitive or difficult questions of exhibitors, staff, volunteers or spokespeople.
- Leafleting: includes placing disparaging stickers, flyers, literature on or at displays and in public areas such as washrooms, entrance doors, etc.
- Verbal confrontations: loud accusations or arguments directed at exhibitors or staff designed to draw public attention.
- Demonstrations: may be orderly or disruptive (civil disobedience); may be quiet or vocal. Usually involve signs, banners and/or costumes/props. Media may be in attendance.
- Criminal damage: vandalism, threats of harm to persons or property, animal release.

Be Prepared:

- Minimize your risk. Keep your house in order: ensure exhibitors abide by your standards.
- Respond to visitor complaints. Take appropriate steps to resolve problem situations quickly and inform the complainant of your actions.
- Be prepared. Prepare public information materials; designate a crisis management team with assigned roles and responsibilities; follow crisis action plans in the event of protests.
- Have spokespeople prepared to deal with the media.
- Ensure staff, volunteers and exhibitors know what steps to take in the event of problems.



Dealing with Difficult People:

- Remember who your audience is: don't provide the public attention and platform they desire.
- Avoid arguments or confrontations. Stay calm, polite and courteous.
- Diffuse the situation: divert their attention, involve them in discussion, or end the discussion.
- Politely but firmly ask them to leave. Call security or appropriate supervisor if necessary.
- Specific suggestions: "Do you have a specific question?" or "Perhaps Mr. X could help you" or "I'm sorry you feel that way" or "I'm afraid I can't share your opinion". Then turn your attention to someone or something else or remove yourself.



COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

How Do I Communicate Effectively?

- Be a good listener.
- Be positive.
- Be yourself.
- Be understandable.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Make it relevant.
- Make it interesting.
- Be sincere and honest when answering.



Why Should I Communicate with the Public?

The average Canadian is more than your customer; as citizens they can affect how you do business. The average Canadian is also more than one generation removed from farming and food production. Most people give little thought to where our food comes from and even fewer people have an accurate understanding of our modern food production system.

Recent polls show that Canadians generally view farmers very positively as an important part of Canadian life. However, those same polls show that their concerns about food safety, agriculture's impact on the environment, and animal care are all rising. This erosion in the public's image of farmers and food producers is most pronounced in young people — our future.

What Can I Expect?

Most of the people you will talk to will be genuinely surprised and curious about farming and food production. In a recent poll by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity, 94% of non farming Canadians admitted they knew little or nothing about agriculture. When asked if they wanted to know more about food and farming, more than two thirds of respondents said yes.

Some Canadians may have inaccurate perceptions of farmers and farming. Most people have genuine questions or concerns



How Should I Communicate with the Public?

Speak Urban. Most people you will meet, whether media or politicians, consumers attending your local fair or children in the classroom, will have little or no knowledge of agriculture and will not understand industry jargon. **It is important to always talk in their language** not ours. This may mean substituting words they'll understand (ie. birthing instead of farrowing). You will have to make a conscious effort to use words and phrases which are familiar and understandable to non-farmers.

Bring It Home. Many people cannot relate very well to farming animals, so it helps to make things personal. Show people what it means for them, in terms of their food, or jobs, or our environment. Use "every day" comparisons that non-farmers can relate to and are familiar with.

Catch Their Interest. Because people limit their attention to what is interesting or important, packaging and presentation are crucial. Make it fun with trivia games or "hands-on" activities; make it interesting with props (i.e. animals, feed samples, byproducts displays or farm tools) or interesting facts and figures; make it important with catchy slogans or eye appealing graphics and photos.

Keep it Short and Simple. Avoid technical detailed explanations. Keep your presentations/explanations short and simple. People who want to know more will keep the questions coming.

Be Specific. It is important to point out every farm or business may do things a little different. Not better or worse, just different. Talk about what YOU do on YOUR farm or business. Whenever possible, leave generalized "industry" statements to industry groups and governments. When making general statements, never talk absolutes and always quote your source. (i.e. "According to xxx, most Canadian farms. . .")

Be Yourself. Talk about what you know and stick to the subject matter that you are comfortable with. If someone asks a question you're unsure or uncomfortable about answering, refer them to someone qualified to answer, or offer to find the answer for them. It's always better to admit that you don't have an answer than to give the wrong information. Be sure that you do follow up on questions you cannot answer.

Stick to the Facts: Agricultural awareness begins at home, so do your homework and stay on top of changing trends in your industry. We all have personal opinions, but it's best to leave yours at home so others can make their opinions based on facts.

Be Prepared: Keep a record of common and not so common questions. Spend time researching and refining your answers.



Resist Pointing Fingers: Avoid deflecting criticism or criticizing someone else to make you or your sector look good. A negative approach only reflects badly on you and hurts everyone in the industry.

Broaden Understanding: Always explain **WHY** things are done (or not done), not just **HOW**. Explain what would/could happen if things were done differently, or not done at all.

Put Things Into Perspective: Comparing past and present, alternative methods, costs and benefits (trade-offs), or drawing parallels to everyday life all help people see a more complete picture.

Tap Into Youngsters: Children can provide great access to adults. Since children are naturally less inhibited than adults, encourage youngsters to ask questions. Be prepared, children can also ask tougher questions. Provide answers that both they and the adults can understand. Mentioning your own children or grandchildren is a great opener with parents and is an easy way to introduce the family farm concept. In classrooms, develop messages for parents in materials or assignments that children can take home. Since youngsters are more willing to listen to their peers, let young farmers deliver the message for you. There are many willing spokespeople in 4-H and Junior Farmers, or even within your own family.

How Do I Deal with Sensitive Issues?

Food, from the way we produce it to the way we prepare it is coming under increasing public scrutiny. Issues surrounding food safety, environmental quality, biotechnology and animal "rights" are being debated in classrooms, legislatures and newspapers across the country. Only by addressing these issues with the public can we in agriculture be part of the debate.

Be a Good Listener: Comparing past and present, alternative methods, costs and benefits (trade-offs), or drawing parallels to everyday life all help people see a more complete picture.

Ask Questions First. Use questions of your own to find out what a person knows and understands about their issue or concern. Use critical questions to get people to think about other aspects of the issue, implications of their solution, or to analyze their own information.

Respect Others' Opinion. Avoid preaching at people or showing a lack of respect for their opinions even if they differ greatly from yours. We are all entitled to our views.

Encourage Informed Decisions. Resist the urge to "convert" people to your way of thinking. The goal isn't to "sell" your product or way of life, but rather the information needed for people to make their own decisions.

Be Understanding. Respect people's level of knowledge, even when it seems far less than what you think it should be. We want to increase people's level of understanding, not insult it.



Correct False Assumptions. All too often, people's concerns are based around a false premise or assumption. It is more important to correct the premise than the details. For example, debating the amount of water used to produce a pound of beef misses the point. Go to the heart of the matter – which is water isn't "used up" at all, rather it is recycled.

Show You Share the Same Concerns. Find the common ground and work from there. For example, if someone thinks a certain practice is "cruel", begin by explaining that you care about animals too, then go on to explain why that practice is in the best interest of the animal (and ultimately the consumer too). If someone is concerned about food safety, begin by explaining you eat the same food they do and you care about the well-being of your family just as much as they care about theirs, then go on to explain the rules and regulations that you follow.

Be Positive. Always explain the benefits first; to the consumer, to the animals, to the environment, to the economy/society and finally to the farmer. Talk about how the agriculture and food industry has changed and look to the future for more positive changes for the industry.

Be Proud. Canadian farmers and food producers should be proud of what they do. Although no industry is perfect, the agriculture and food sector has little to apologize for. Always remember to point out that change is a part of life and like other industries the agriculture industry is always looking for better ways to do things.

Stay Calm, Cool and Collected. Avoid arguments. Allow people to express their opinions first. Then respond calmly and positively. Correct misinformation with facts. Point out contradictions or inconsistencies. Help them to see the bigger picture by pointing out things they may not have considered. Always be prepared to agree to disagree.

Beware of Traps. Recognize special interest crusaders for what they are: a vocal minority often with extreme or rigid beliefs. While they don't represent the average Canadian, the publicity they generate can and will have an impact on other's views. If confronted by activists, protesters or a hostile individual, don't waste time trying to communicate with them. Politely answer their question then ignore them or move on to someone else. Never give them the attention and credibility they crave by confronting or debating them.



Three Simple Messages to Communicate to Everyone:

1. The proper care and treatment of animals is important to me. I have an obligation to make sure that the animals on my farm are well cared for.
2. Canadians have a food supply that is safe, abundant and affordable thanks to advanced technologies and responsible practices used in today's food system.
3. As farmers with a way of life that is very close to the land, we understand the importance of healthy soil, water and air. We live on our farms with our families and depend on the environment to create a healthy place to live and provide the right conditions to grow crops and raise livestock.

Be an Agricultural Ambassador:

For many people, this may be the first time they have met a farmer or food producer. Remember you are a representing the entire agri-food industry. The impression you leave will be a lasting one.

If you would like more information on communicating with the public, please contact us.



LIVESTOCK EXHIBITOR CODE OF CONDUCT

The proper care of animals is just as important at a show or exhibition as it is on the farm. Proper management is important for the animals, and it also presents the positive image to the fair visitor that farmers care for their animals.

As a proactive step, your fair board or committee should attempt to establish an "Exhibitor Code of Practice/Conduct" which could be sent out to exhibitors with registration information and posted in barn areas for visitor information. If such a Code is put in place, the Board must be prepared to take action when it needs to be enforced. Examples of items which could be included in such a code are illustrated as follows:

- As an exhibitor, you represent your livestock's particular commodity group, and the agriculture industry as a whole. It is very important that you portray the positive face of agriculture to the public and to fellow exhibitors. Therefore, the following "Exhibitor Code of Practice" has been developed to aid in your approach.
- This Code of Practice explains what is expected of exhibitors who are handling animals, as well as attendants of animal displays. It is expected that the Exhibitor Code of Practice will be strictly followed. If exhibitors do not adhere to the code they will be asked to leave the fairgrounds and further actions will be left to the discretion of the Board.



Sample Code of Conduct

Livestock Exhibitor Code of Conduct

The _____ Fair is committed to responsible animal care and treatment. This Code of Conduct outlines what is expected of livestock exhibitors in the handling and exhibiting of all animals involved with our Fair.

This Code has been developed to meet the following objectives:

- To ensure the health and well being of all animals at the fair
- To demonstrate an accurate and responsible animal care message to the public
- To maintain the integrity of all livestock competitions, displays, and sales

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- Livestock and poultry must be transported to and from the fair in accordance with all humane transport regulations and standards.
 - Loading and unloading must be undertaken using proper equipment and procedures.
 - All animals must be treated and handled in a responsible manner. The well being of the animals shall take precedence over the demands of owners, sellers, buyers, organizers, sponsors, and officials.
 - The care of all animals must be as consistent as possible with their normal schedules and standards. High standards of nutrition, health, sanitation, environment and safety must be met at all times. All handling, housing and veterinary treatment must ensure adequate animal care.
 - Livestock should be prepared with proper training, fitting and grooming prior to the fair. Excessive disciplining of animals at the fair is unacceptable.
 - Exhibitors are expected to provide adequate training for anyone handling their livestock. Untrained individuals, including fair personnel and visitors, should not be permitted to handle animals or equipment.
 - Exhibitors should take every opportunity to enhance public awareness, education and appreciation of proper livestock management and handling practises.

There will be no tolerance for any mistreatment of animals. Any unacceptable exhibitor conduct will be subject to action including possible elimination from the competition(s) and/or exhibit, at the discretion of the Board.



HOW TO RUN A FARM TOUR

IF A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS, A FARM TOUR IS WORTH A MILLION

Organizing and hosting a farm tour is an excellent way to reach an audience that is no longer familiar with farming. It provides an opportunity for non-farmers (or farmers from another commodity) to see and learn first hand how and why things are done. It also provides a solid base of good will and increased public confidence in farming practices. Whether you bring the public to your farm or the farm to the public (i.e. farm displays), a successful event requires careful planning.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A FARM TOUR:

Set Your Limits

Generally, tours on the farm should be aimed at carefully targeted, well-screened audiences. Your farm operation may be appropriate for certain sized groups or certain age levels but not others. You may only have time for tours at certain times of the year, or may want to limit the number of tours you give in any one year.

Choose Your Audience

Schools (kindergarten through university) and youth groups (church, 4-H, or scouting organizations) usually find farm tours wonderful field trips. Often the teacher or leader can tie the farm visit to what they are teaching in their classroom or meetings. Senior citizen or service clubs (which often include local business and community leaders) may appreciate an opportunity to see the workings of a present day farm business. And remember, if farming interests are seen as crucial to community interests, local citizens will support them.

Farm tours also offer colourful photo and feature story opportunities for journalists and help to better prepare them for future agricultural and food related news stories. If you invite journalists, plan the story you want the media to tell and do your homework. Follow the guidelines in Farm & Food Care Ontario's "How to Deal with the Media" fact sheet. While it is advisable to have a "no photos" policy for farm visitors, exceptions should be considered for bona fide media under tightly controlled situations. A picture speaks volumes – but keep in mind those words can be positive or negative.



Elected officials and government bureaucrats can benefit from the insight gained from a farm tour when making decisions that affect the farming community. Consider timing your tour to coincide with a larger agriculture awareness event or organize a multi-farm tour and invite elected officials to talk with local constituents and the media.

Consider Your Costs

Costs will depend on the extensiveness of the tour. However, just preparing for and conducting a tour requires time and labour that take you away from other things. Advertising and promotion, special equipment (like barriers to block off restricted areas, portable toilets, signage), additional liability insurance, hand out materials, and product samples will all add to your costs. Check with your local agriculture awareness/Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) committees, provincial commodity groups or local agri-businesses to see if funds or materials are available. Consider charging a nominal fee per person to help offset your expenses.

Farm Safety Comes First

Take a critical look at your operation and identify all potential safety hazards. Equipment and storage areas, access to animals, ponds and lagoons are all potential safety hazards to those unfamiliar with farm surroundings. Identify all off-limit areas and use signage, locks and barriers to restrict access. Check with your insurance agent regarding liability insurance. Ensure that tour groups (especially children) are adequately chaperoned. Never allow people to wander on their own. Begin all tours by explaining the ground rules.

Contact the **Canadian Agricultural Safety Association** (www.casa-acsa.ca) for tips and advice. If providing food samples, be sure you meet local public health regulations.

Promote a Positive Image

Be proud of your role as a farmer. Be positive, not defensive. After all, you help feed the world and you do it with care.

Clean working conditions and a sense of pride in one's farm are a psychological benefit to any farmer. A neat attractive farm also creates a positive image with visitors and neighbours.

- Keep physical facilities in good repair.
- Keep weeds and grass mowed.
- Provide good drainage.
- Practice good fly, rodent and waste control programs.
- Do a little extra for tours: make sure facilities are bright, clean, tidy and free of hazards.
- Plan your farm chores around tours and avoid unsightly chores like spreading manure the same day of a tour.



- Take an imaginary tour of your operation through an outsider's eyes or invite a non farming friend to do it for you.

Proper care of farm animals is essential if farmers are to maintain the respect of the public. It takes people to manage animals properly, not just good equipment.

- Follow your Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals.
- Stay up to date on changing standards for housing and handling requirements.
- Take advantage of livestock specialists, crop specialists, veterinarians and nutritionists to ensure your animals receive the latest and best that research and experience can offer.
- Follow good animal husbandry practices in handling, transporting and holding livestock.

Be an agricultural ambassador. The most effective public relations activities are those that reinforce widely held beliefs:

- Farmers are hard working, honest, friendly people.
- Farmers provide abundant, wholesome and affordable food.
- Farmers do so responsibly and professionally.
- The family farm remains the backbone of Canadian agriculture.

To the public a farmer is a farmer, so remember that in their eyes you are representing all farmers. Do not be a source of misinformation:

- Speak on what you know and limit your comments to your farm.
- Refer questions you are not sure about.
- Do not build yourself (or your sector) up by deflecting criticism somewhere else.

Make it Relevant and Make it Understandable

Speak the layman's language – many urban people aren't used to agricultural jargon.

- Talk in terms that your visitors will understand: cartons of milk rather than kilograms of milk, birthing pens rather than farrowing units, neutering rather than castration.
- Make comparisons that are relevant to your audiences' experiences. By comparing disease outbreaks in livestock to chicken pox in people, for example, you can illustrate that even undertaking the best precautions some diseases cannot be prevented or controlled.



Don't assume that the facts speak for themselves and don't expect people to see the obvious.

- Develop a set program and verbal presentation for every tour.
- Tailor your presentation to your audience: children for example want to know about the animals and their life cycles, businessmen want to know about the business side of farming etc.
- Pick a theme or key messages such as sustainable agriculture, food quality or animal care.
- Explain how and why things are done on your farm and point out the obvious.
- Point out the shade, water and feed available to animals.
- Highlight animal housing that protects them from predators, provides climate control and easy access to fresh feed and water.
- Explain restraining devices or point out the lack of them.
- Point out practices that make birth less stressful and protect the young (i.e. birthing pens).
- Discuss medical care given to livestock – vaccines to protect against disease and medication to cure illness.
- Describe animal handling practices necessary to the health and welfare of the animal – beak trimming, tail docking, needle teeth trimming, dehorning, neutering, ear marking, tattooing and ear tagging.
- Discuss feeding procedures and basics of animal nutrition.
- Always allow plenty of time for questions and to address common misconceptions in your prepared presentation.

Make it Memorable

For many visitors this may be the first (and only) opportunity to see and experience a farm. Think about how to involve the public and how to make factual learning fun with hands-on activities or visual aids or hand-outs. Milking or shearing demonstrations, egg grading or butter making, or a ride on the hay wagon all add to a memorable and positive farm tour experience.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING UP A FARM DISPLAY:

Taking the farm to the public rather than inviting the public to the farm offers many advantages, including reaching large numbers of people in a short period of time. While the recommendations for farm tours apply, farm displays also raise some special considerations.

Take Advantage of Established Events

Coordinating a farm display with an established event such as an annual fair or agriculture awareness event can help increase their visibility and appeal. Many Agriculture in the Classroom and agriculture awareness committees hold annual "school days" where commodity stations are set-up for students to visit. Some of the major fairs now include a farm display, which may or may not include school tours.



The animals and crops brought for exhibition automatically promote strong interest and serve as visual aids for teaching the public about agriculture and food production.

Present an Accurate Picture

A farm animal exhibit should reflect today's farms and farming practices. Petting zoos or "Old McDonald's Farms", while appealing to the public, do little to foster understanding and appreciation of present day agriculture.

- Exhibit mature animals (with their young if appropriate) in accurate settings: sows and litters in birthing pens; dairy cattle in stalls; layers in cages.
- The Recommended Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals should be followed in designing such displays. Signage should indicate this.
- Agribusinesses or commodity groups may be willing to help by providing the equipment, supplies and animals needed to set up such a display.
- Inviting the local humane society and/or agriculture inspector to inspect and comment on the display is encouraged.

Animal Wellbeing Comes First

- It is crucial to ensure that the needs of animals are met. This includes adequate bedding, ventilation, lighting and temperatures. Provision of feed and water as well as routine chores should be scheduled to meet the animals' needs and not accommodate the visitors' schedule.
- Ensure that only qualified caretakers are put in charge.
- Due to the foreign atmosphere such surroundings present it is advisable to deliver animals ahead of the event's opening to all them time to acclimatize.
- With larger animals in particular, it may be advisable to use show animals who are used to crowds and frequent handling.
- Any animals that show signs of illness or distress should be removed immediately and return home for care.
- When handling animals maintain an even temperament. The compassion and ease shown in handling livestock is the best possible testimony to animal welfare.



Communication is Key

An unmanned animal exhibit is a recipe for disaster, both from a potential public and animal safety point of view and for fostering misunderstanding or misconceptions. It is important that knowledgeable trained people be assigned to talk about the animals and farming practices. There is no one better than the men and women who raise such animals. Not only does the public get to see and learn about the animals but they get to meet a farmer too. Communication training is important and can be provided through your commodity group or Farm & Food Care Ontario.

- Informative, fact based signage and written materials are also important to further explain farming practices and your particular commodity. Make sure that any written information is both accurate and understandable.
- Colourful and attractive displays and materials along with games, draws or handouts all help attract and stop traffic.
- Supplementing an animal exhibit with an information booth on nutrition or the environment or a byproduct display is a good way to provide the whole picture and tell a complete story about agriculture and food production.

HELP IS AVAILABLE:

- Talk to others who have held farm tours or farm displays for their advice and suggestions.
- Work with your local agriculture awareness or AITC committees.
- Contact your provincial commodity group for resources, contacts, materials and training or advice.
- Work with local agribusinesses and/or area farmers.
- Contact Farm & Food Care Ontario for materials and training or advice.

If you would like more information on holding farm tours, please contact us



HOW TO WORK WITH THE MEDIA

IT'S THE MEDIA'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DELIVER THE STORY. IT'S AGRICULTURE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TELL IT.

The media is our most powerful ally in getting the facts about farming and food production out to the public. If we work with the media properly we will be much more effective in getting our message out.

Understanding Your Relationship with the Media

If you are interviewed, your side of the story will be part of the news report. If you decline an interview, you lose the opportunity to get your story across.

Journalists have deadlines. Respect them – a missed deadline is a missed opportunity.

You don't determine what the news is – the media does.

Media are generally more concerned with serving their audience than promoting any one interest. You should expect to get a fair hearing of your point-of-view but don't expect the media to take your side. There is no such thing as "off the record" so assume that everything you say may be used. Remember, if you choose to say "no comment" it can reflect badly on you.

A journalist's boss is the editor or producer. They, not the journalist, usually decide what appears and how it appears

Prepare for the Media Interview

Avoid going into a media interview 'cold' – prepare yourself.

If possible, avoid doing an interview immediately. Returning the call or setting an appointment to do the interview is the best strategy. It allows you to collect your information and your thoughts.



Before an interview: ask what subjects the journalist wants to cover; who he or she is reporting for and when the story will appear; what other sources of information they will be using and who else is being interviewed.

Develop your own strategy for the story: decide on the key points you want to get across and how you can work them into the interview. Think about the types of questions that could be asked and have your answers ready.

Be sure of your facts: Keep up to date on the current issues and happenings in your industry and know the accurate and up-to-date facts and figures. Know the case for the opposing point-of-view and what stories have recently been reported. Be ready to present your side without appearing defensive. Contact your provincial organization or Farm & Food Care Ontario to obtain any additional information or guidance you might require.

Plan the points you want to make before the interview begins (2-3 key points) and know what you want to say before going into an interview.

Speak in a language everyone understands. Don't use industry jargon and always define industry terms. For example, a pork producer knows what a farrowing pen is but the people we're trying to reach don't. Remember, effective communications means being understood.

When visuals are part of the interview (i.e. TV and photos) remember your appearance. Dress for the occasion and location.

Doing the Media Interview

Be friendly – a journalist is helping you to reach the public.

Make positive statements about your sector or area of expertise.

Be honest and direct. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Journalists know when you're trying to hide something and will do their best to get it out of you. Never make quotes unless you can substantiate them and only talk about things you know.

Be brief and concise. Put your most important point first and learn to talk in statements. Avoid run-on-sentences. This is especially important for radio and TV (electronic) interviews which want short (6 second) clips not long explanations.



Take control. Don't be afraid to steer the interview to your key points and make your points often. When you've answered the question or made your points, stop talking. Resist the urge to fill 'dead space'.

Illustrate your point with personal examples or analogies that others unfamiliar with the topic can relate to. Not only does this help to make you understood, but it adds interest to the story.

Don't get bogged down in statistics and numbers – especially on radio and tv.

Don't get bogged down in statistics and numbers – especially on radio and tv.

Don't repeat a journalist's buzz words – unless they are your own and are positive. If a reporter asks questions using loaded or negative buzz words, do not give credence to them by using them. You can also provide a service by explaining why such words or phrases are incorrect.

Try to avoid answering hypothetical "what if" questions. Make your own statement. If you don't understand a question, ask the reporter to re-phrase it.

If a statement is made that is not true, refute it immediately and politely. Make sure to correct it in an informative and helpful manner.

If you don't like the question, you don't have to respond to it directly. Either rephrase the general message on the topic using your key point, or refer the journalist to someone better qualified to answer.

Rephrase your key points in a response.

Repeat key points for clarity and emphasis.

Keep your cool. Journalists may try to bait you and put you on the defensive. In these situations, remain calm and take your time explaining your point-of-view. Even if your explanations don't end up in the news story it will help the journalist's understanding.

Offer the names of other qualified spokespeople within the industry that the journalist might be interested in interviewing.

Make literature available to the media and always offer to send them additional information that they can use for this or future news stories.



Keep a record of media contacts. This will help you remember which journalists are fair and balanced and who you can call on when you have something to say.

Be confident, concise and enthusiastic.

Be Proactive: Some Things You Can Do:

Keep the media informed and in-touch by adding them to mailing lists, inviting them to meetings and contacting them with the story ideas.

Write a "letter-to-the-editor" when you feel it is required.

Show your appreciation for well-done stories. Take the time to contact journalists and/or management who do accurate and balanced stories. They'll appreciate the feedback and you'll make a valuable contact. You can also follow-up by way of a letter-to-the-editor or viewer/listener mail.

Although no one likes to admit their mistakes, both interviewees and journalists can make them. If the facts that appear in a story are incorrect contact the journalist or the editor/producer and politely point out the error. If the error was yours, point that out too. You can also follow-up with a letter-to-the-editor.

If an article or story is misleading or unbalanced contact the journalist directly. Be firm but reasonable in suggesting that, in the interest of fair reporting, he or she cover your side of the story too.

If you are aware of a TV program or advertisement that will be airing that is clearly anti-agriculture, begin a letter-writing campaign to the station's management demanding the show or ad not be aired. (This has proven to work in the past.)

If you are aware of a phone-in show dealing with agriculture, let other producers know and encourage them to call in with their points-of view.

If you see inaccurate or antiquated footage or photos accompanying stories about agriculture, contact Farm & Food Care Ontario so we can pursue it.

If you would like more information on communicating with the media, please contact us



HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR IS A SIMPLE, QUICK AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO REACH THE PUBLIC

A letter to the editor can be an effective way for individuals and/or organizations to deliver important information to the public. The "letters" section in newspapers, and radio and television stations that have a listener/viewer feedback system, exist to provide a forum for public comment or debate. The "letters" section is widely read. Whether you are writing a letter to respond to "bad press" or to reinforce "good press", there are a number of important points to keep in mind. This factsheet has been developed to help in writing effective letters to the editor.

Things to Consider Before Putting Pen to Paper:

The Purpose of a Letter to the Editor

- To correct or clarify information or perceptions.
- To provide additional information.
- To express an opinion or point of view.
- To introduce or reinforce a message.

Should You Write a Letter?

A letter to the editor is generally written in response to a specific news story, editorial or letter. Publications also allow for general letters that comment on timely issues or events not reported by the publication. It is always appropriate to compliment the media when they provide balanced and accurate coverage of an issue. A letter to the editor is one of several ways to respond to or address media reports and issues we know and care about. Other options include contacting the journalist directly, submitting a professionally written opinion piece/editorial, or, in the case of an ongoing concern, requesting a meeting with the editor or editorial board.



- If you read, see or hear something that is inaccurate or misleading, do not overreact. Try to be as objective as possible.
- If an error or omission is not significant, let it go. Do not be a nit-picker. There will always be another opportunity.
- Sometimes what seems negative or unbalanced to those close to a subject, is not seen that way by others. Get a second opinion. Ask someone who is not directly involved to comment. If the report seriously misinforms them or leaves false impressions, then you have grounds to respond.
- If it's a case of you not liking the story, but it's factually based and includes various points of view, it usually is best to leave it alone.
- If the story has an unfair, derisive, negative tone, write a letter to the editor that lays out your response.
- If the story is not likely to be noticed (i.e. small and/or buried in the back pages) it may not be worth drawing attention to. If on the other hand, it is prominently placed or likely to be noticed it may be worth responding to.
- Consider whether a letter to the editor will be counterproductive. Will your letter add fuel to the fire (by drawing additional media attention to an issue that is likely to die on its own) or will it serve to put the matter to rest?
- Are there others who can respond? If there is someone better qualified to respond? Can you encourage others to also write letters, especially credible third parties?
- Look at the long term. What is the publication's track record on the issue? Do they consistently take one side in their news coverage and editorials or do they (over time) run stories that provide differing points of view? If the reporting has been consistently poor or biased, a letter to the ombudsman (editor in chief, producer, etc.) may be in order. Industry representatives can ask for a meeting with the editor or editorial board.
- Can the errors or omissions be corrected in a letter to the editor? If there are many errors and the allegations are very serious.
- Can the errors or omissions be corrected in a letter to the editor? If there are many errors and the allegations are very serious, you may consider submitting an opinion piece for publication or asking a third party knowledgeable on the subject to do so.
- In the event of factual errors consider calling the journalist directly and politely point out the error. If an error is significant you can ask for an immediate correction. Usually the reporter will make a note for the next time he/she writes on the subject. If appropriate, suggest reading materials and send copies if possible. If you still don't get satisfaction, consider calling the editor and follow up with a personal letter and/or write a letter for publication.



- Don't just write critical letters. Letters should also be used to reinforce positive and accurate stories. Journalists, like anyone else, appreciate receiving credit when they've done a good job. A supportive letter can help balance any criticisms they may receive.
- Letters should also be used to reinforce or clarify a particular message or point of view.
- A news story or editorial can be used as the opportunity to provide additional information and to get another message across. Don't overlook reports or editorials that are not specifically related but that in some way can be used to deliver a point or message.

Don't underestimate the effect of this type of feed-back. Not only are letters to the editor widely read, but they can have an effect on the editorial stance a publication or program adopts (after all, readers/audiences are their customers).

How to Begin

Become familiar with various publications, since each one will differ in their policies on letters. Spend a few days carefully reading the "letters" section in your newspaper(s). What sorts of letters get printed? Do they have to be very short? Should the tone be "conservative", or does the editor prefer a "bite". Does the publication prefer to run letters from local individuals or organizations? Does the publication reserve the right to edit letters? Most publications outline their specific policies in the letters section or on their mastheads.

Begin by collecting your thoughts on paper. What are the main points you want to make? Keep them to three or less. List them by priority and use this as an "outline". Remember you do not have to answer every error in the story or letter, only the most significant ones. Often it is better to use one or two errors or perceptions as examples to make your point.

Decide on the "approach" of your letter. What is the best way to make your point? Should it be forceful or gentle? Can criticisms be delivered in a helpful way? Can you raise questions or options for the reader to consider? Should it be serious or could you use a catchy phrase or thoughtful wit? Would relaying personal experience or expertise strengthen your message?

Always approach your subject with an intelligent argument. Do not just voice your sentiments. Avoid whining or complaining.



Address the message or perception not the details. Avoid setting yourself up for rebuttal letters by making absolute statement, or by using facts and figures that can be disputed.

Your letter should stand on its own. Your readers may not have seen the original report.

Once the letter is written, read it over. Are your ideas clear? Is there repetition? Can the letter be simplified? (Even professional writers revise their work several times). Get a second opinion from someone you trust, preferably who didn't see the original item you are writing about.

How to Improve Your Chances of Getting Published

Don't expect a letter to the editor will always be published. Most media are swamped with correspondence and must be selective. They are under no obligation to run a letter. Don't expect a letter to be published immediately. A letter to a large city daily, for example, could take two or more weeks to be published after it is received.

- If you are responding to a specific report or issue, send your letter quickly while the topic is still current. Deliver, fax or email immediately (within one to three days). The address and fax number are provided in the publication. Ensure you send it to the "Letters to the Editor" department.
- Keep it short (less than 150 words) if possible. Shorter letters have a better chance of being published. If a letter is too long, it may be edited down by someone who probably doesn't understand the issue.
- Use logical or chronological order.
- Keep the tone objective and professional. Don't be offensive or make personal attacks. Focus on the information not the person. Letters containing derogatory or libelous statements will be edited or rejected entirely.
- Keep your sentences short (less than 21 words). Shorter sentences have more impact and are more "readable" than long rambling sentences.
- When providing factual information/corrections, include the references or source (i.e. "According to the last census, the number of family owned farms in Canada...")
- Don't use acronyms or industry jargon.
- Check for spelling, grammar and clarity.



Format

Submit type-written letters.

Address the letter to the publication to the attention of the Editor.

Refer to the item you are responding to: title and date, in the opening sentence if possible.

State your position clearly and concisely in the first or second sentence.

The letter must include the author's name and signature, address and telephone number. Most newspapers are required to verify letters they are considering publishing with the author. Reputable publications will not publish anonymous letters.

Whether it is to express an opinion, to set the record straight, or to reinforce accurate information, writing a letter to the editor is one simple, direct and effective way to communicate with the public.

If you would like more information on writing letters to the editor, please contact us.

