



Tips for Productive Conversations with Media

TOP 5 TIPS

1. **Ask for questions in advance.** Do research on the reporter. Follow up with your questions for the reporter. Ask for a practice interview if it is going to be live.
2. **Keep it short and simple.** Use analogies to help people understand farming language.
3. **Connect with people's values** before sharing facts.
4. **Get in the last word.** If you hear the reporter wrapping up, be sure to summarize again the main point you wished to convey.
5. **Commit to following up.** Thank them and provide feedback on the story. This will help you build a relationship with the reporter, and they will call you again.

PREPARE & PRACTICE

- Remember: Strategies, not scripts. Use CAP (Connection, Action, Perspective)
 - Take the other person's perspective; identify a point of connection and shared values with the audience
- Remember your 2-3 key messages
- TV/Radio: ask will it be live or pre-recorded? Be sure to practice out loud.

MANAGE THE FLOW

It's a transaction, not a conversation. Deliver your messages. Make your point. Stop.

- **Build a Bridge** (*Another point to consider is ...*)
- **Flag Your message** (*Here's what is most important ...*)
- **Connect to Your Experience** (*On our farm ...*)
- **Interview Yourself** (*Am I concerned about water quality? You bet ... Would I ever consider that approach? Yes, if ...*)
- **Get in the last word.** Ask reporter to summarize what you said; and correct if needed

HANDLE TOUGH STUFF

If you misspeak:

Say something like *Pardon me, I misspoke ... or That's not quite what I meant, let me try that again ...*

If you lose your temper:

- Apologize, pause and take a deep breath
- Explain the emotion and the motivation
- Continue with respect — or exit with dignity

If you truly can't or shouldn't answer a question:

- Thank them for asking or for their interest
- State your preferences (*I prefer not to ...*), wishes (*I wish I could ...*) or obstacles (*I can't because ...*)
- Say why you can't or won't (*We don't have all the answers yet ... The research isn't complete ... I'm not the expert on that ... It's too early to tell ...*)
- Bridge (*What I can tell you is ...*) or defer to an authority (*The best person to ask is ...*)



END WELL

- Say *thank you*
- Open the door to a future conversation
- Commit to following up — and do it

CONTACT NEW ENGLAND DAIRY FOR:

- Interest in being contacted for media interviews
- Reporter contact info and background info
- To send your story ideas to reporters
- Talking points for an upcoming interview
- Inviting media to an event
- Writing a letter to the editor

WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY

- Surprising
- Relevant/timely
- New and/or rare
- Weird and wacky
- Your expertise
- Impact on people's lives
- Human interest

What are possible story ideas about you or your farm?