

# CARRYING THE MESSAGE FROM THE FARM TO THE NEWSROOM

*Michele Cooper and Scott Wallin of Dairy Farmers, Inc. will discuss the following points with the group and then engage in a mock interview that will display potential pitfalls with the media and how they can be avoided.*

## **I. TRUST IN FARMERS**

Results of a study indicate that American farmers have the confidence of the American people. Always remember that the words you speak carry added meaning because they're coming from you.

## **II. SAY WHAT?**

The reporters who are interviewing you likely don't share your background. Demographics show that most journalists come from a suburban upbringing and likely won't understand the technical lingo you use. The biggest thing to remember is that complexity is not to be admired, it's to be avoided.

## **III. KEEP IT SIMPLE**

Say what you need to say to effectively answer a question and then move along. You control the interview, not the reporter.

## **IV. DON'T LET 'EM SEE YOU SWEAT**

It's always possible that you will be asked a question that makes you feel uncomfortable or a question that lacks true insight or understanding. Don't become annoyed. Your body language can speak volumes, too.

## **V. REACH THOSE BRIDGES**

If you've been asked a question that you're not quite sure how to answer or one that you'd rather not tackle, use the "bridging" technique. It's OK to tell a reporter "I can't answer that question but what I can tell you is that American-produced dairy products are the safest in the world."

## **VI. THESE MESSAGES ARE KEY**

All of you are experts in your field. But it never hurts to review the industry's key messages so there's, in essence, "one voice" speaking for all of us. It's also OK to repeat your key messages throughout the interview so the audience is more likely to remember them.

## Before the Interview ...

### ■ Practice

- In front of mirror
- In front of friend
- In car
- In front of video camera
  - Tape yourself
  - Critique for “ums”
  - Watch for body language

### ■ Ask questions; get info you need

- Length of interview?
- Live or taped?
- Focus of interview?
- Other guests?
- Audience?

### ■ Image is everything

- Present yourself in a professional manner
- Dress in simple, tailored clothing

## Interview Techniques

### How to Control the Interview and Get to Your Key Messages

### ■ Bridging

- “Yes, and in addition to that ...”
- “No, let me explain...”
- “I don’t know, but what I do know is...”

### ■ Flagging

- “The most important point to remember is...”

### ■ Hooking

- Provide a fact that begs a follow-up question, such as:  
“Currently six out of 10 boys and seven out of 10 girls ages 6-11 are not meeting their daily calcium requirements.”

## Simple Tips for a Successful Interview

- Expect the unexpected
- Deliver 3 main messages in 30 seconds
- Use rest of time to build on key points
- Nothing is “Off the Record” – *EVER!*
- Picture the perfect headline
- Know your key messages (and keep them short and simple)
- Provide the missing element
- It’s okay not to know
- Rephrase a loaded question
- Never repeat the negative
- Watch for body language cues
- Use props to strengthen message, visual
- Be yourself
- Play it straight; be truthful
- Always use simple sentences, don’t use jargon
- Be enthusiastic!
- Credibility is everything
- Give a resource, i.e. Toll-free number, Web site

## Dairy Key Messages

- **Overall Key Message:** America's dairy farmers are dedicated to providing you with safe, high quality milk and dairy products. Our commitment to quality also means caring for their animals and the land.
- **Animal Care:**  
Dairy cows must be healthy and well cared for in order to produce pure, wholesome milk.  
*Dairy farmers recognize that proper animal care practices help lead to the production of high quality milk.*  
*Dairy farmers take care of their herds by providing a nutritious diet, good medical care and healthy living conditions.*
- **Environment:**  
Farm land is the farmers' home, so it is personally important for farmers to protect the land for their family and future generations.  
Our land is their investment, and dairy farmers want to protect this investment for our children and grandchildren.
- **Food Safety:** Milk and dairy products undergo a number of safety, quality and sanitation procedures such as pasteurization, making them among the most highly regulated and safest foods available to consumers.
- **Nutrition and Value:** Milk offers a powerful package of calcium and eight other essential nutrients for you and your family to enjoy for just pennies per ounce.
- **Way of Life:** Many dairy farms are multigenerational businesses that are family owned and operated. Each takes pride in contributing to the well being of their community.
- **Good health starts with dairy.** Eat more lowfat dairy foods to better manage your weight and reduce your risk for high blood pressure, osteoporosis and certain cancers.
- **Dairy matters at every age for everyone!** From fat-free to lactose-free, it's easy to get 3-A-Day of dairy.
- **Dairy is doctor recommended.** The American Academy of Pediatrics urges kids to choose milk, yogurt and cheese for the calcium they need.
- The dairy checkoff helps to increase overall demand for dairy products.
- The dairy checkoff is managed efficiently and effectively.
- The dairy checkoff helps to defend and enhance the image of dairy products and the dairy industry.