

Making the
most of the
media...

An easy guide.

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We live in a media age where we are bombarded with news coverage, 24 hours a day.

Traditional print media has been supplemented by rolling news services on television and online news, giving up-to-the-minute access anywhere in the world.

This means that the media need to fill more airtime, which, in turn, means more opportunities to deliver positive messages about dairy farming.

While many people are nervous or suspicious of the media and some have had bad experiences in the past, the media are a tool that can be used. Reporters are looking for information and, as the expert in your field, you have it, so every interview should be seen as a potential opportunity.



At a glance...

- Understand what the media want from you
- You don't have to undertake an interview if it doesn't suit your purposes
- When you are going to be interviewed, find out as much as you can in advance
- Think about your audience – they probably know very little about dairy farming!
- Work out a few simple key messages in advance – and stick to them
- When answering journalists' questions, remember your 'ABC's':
 - ◇ A - Acknowledge the question being asked (don't ignore it)
 - ◇ B - Bridge to your key message
 - ◇ C - Communicate your key message
- Be confident, clear and concise
- And always remember – you are the expert!

If you are asked to do an interview, consider the following questions:

- Am I expert in this area?
- Is there a benefit to my business or the dairy farming industry?
- Could helping the journalist this time be a good 'investment' for the future
- Do I know what my key messages are and can I deliver them effectively?

If the answer to these questions is yes, then you could be ready to undertake a media interview. If not, do not agree to the interview.

The DairyCo press office is on hand to help you make the decision about whether or not to undertake the interview and can be contacted on 024 7647 8888.

Please also remember to keep your milk buyer informed.

Subject of the interview?

Find out as much detail as you can about the subject of the interview and the questions that will be asked. It is unlikely that the journalist will give you a list of questions in advance, but the more information you can gather ahead of the interview, the more likely you are to have some control over it.

Style of the programme?

It is also a good idea to find out as much as you can about the style of the programme and, if possible, the journalist. Information that will help could include:

- How long is the programme?
- What format do interviews normally take and how long are they?
- Will the interview be broadcast live or pre-recorded?
- When will the programme be broadcast?
- Will you be 'face-to-face' with anyone with an opposing view?

Anyone else present?

Knowing who else is on the programme may help you decide whether to do the interview at all - or at least give you an insight into the programme's angle. For example, they may say that someone from an extreme animal welfare organisation is on the programme, in this case you may prefer to forward the query to the DairyCo press office where we can source an industry spokesperson from our own team.

The audience?

Try to identify who the audience is and ensure you prepare your messages so that they are appropriate and accessible – e.g. You should be more careful to use layman's terms with a local newspaper's farming pages, than if you are doing a trade magazine interview.

A good story

- ask yourself: is it really news or is it simply interesting to you?

A 'sound bite'

- a short pithy phrase to capture the essence of the story or angle

An expert

- to explain or uncover the truth behind a story, or to provide a particular angle on it

An opponent

- to give balance to a story

Whatever the interview, try to get it right first time.

Live

Many people are more nervous of live interviews but the advantage of these is that what you say cannot be edited – so you stand a better chance of getting your messages across.

Recorded

If the interview is to be recorded, you can ask to answer the question again if you do not get it quite right first time, or think you can say it better or more clearly. The interviewer also wants the best interview they can get, so simply say something like “I think I can say that more clearly – can we do it again?”. But

remember, once you’ve said something, it is on film, so if it is incorrect, make sure the interviewer knows.

Outline the facts

If you can – outline the facts to the journalist before the interview to set the scene and give your messages context. They will not know as much as you about the subject, so giving them some information may help them to formulate questions.

How will it start?

Ask the interviewer how he or she is going to start the interview and what the first question will be – this will give you time to think about your answer.

The interview may take place 'on location', in a studio or on the telephone.

On location

If the interview is on your farm, your premises will be on view to the entire audience. Make sure that any film crew knows what is expected of them before they arrive – if for example you don't want a particular area to be filmed, then say so but have a good reason. It is best to be honest and open – otherwise they will think you have something to hide.

In the studio

If you have never been to a studio before, ensure you build in plenty of time to get there so that you are not rushed. Take the time to familiarise

yourself with the venue. Ask what is happening and what is expected of you – no-one will mind explaining in advance. Be extra careful of what you say off-camera or microphone in the studio.

You could also be asked to do a 'down-the-line' interview, where you will be in a different studio from the interviewer and unable to see them. This is quite common, especially for radio, but the rules of engagement remain the same.

On the telephone

Often it is easier to agree to a telephone interview, but these can be the most dangerous. We are all used to talking on the telephone and it feels very natural. But remember, you are being interviewed. Stand up when you are talking – not only will this help project your voice, but it also helps stop you becoming too relaxed.

The 'doorstep'

Very occasionally, a journalist will simply turn

up on your doorstep. Do not get angry, simply ask what they want and insist that they remain outside the property...then go inside either to gather your thoughts or call the DairyCo press office, who will be available to help advise you. Do not make the mistake of going straight into answering questions in this scenario.

Avoid drinking tea or coffee...

just before a radio or TV interview – instead stick with water as it does not dry the throat!

Don't go 'off the record'

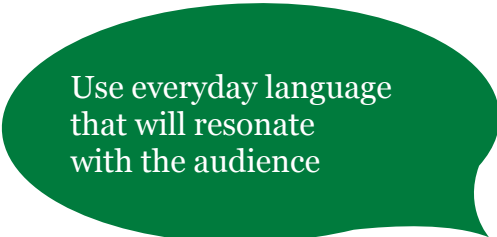
In all cases, do not go 'off the record' or give off the cuff remarks, even when you think the camera or microphone is not on – there are many examples of remarks coming back to haunt interviewees.

Wear what is appropriate to the location.

If you are on the farm, then it is good to wear clean overalls and boots.

If you are in a studio, normally jacket and trousers would be more appropriate.

Avoid checked/striped clothing where possible and keep clothing fairly neutral in colour. The most important thing to remember is that you should be comfortable.



Use everyday language that will resonate with the audience

- Talking to a scientific journal is very different from a TV news show or drivetime radio programme
- Wherever possible, use examples to illustrate your points – and don't be afraid to use an anecdote or personal story
- Avoid using technical language or too many figures

It is very important that you take time to get the message right before you appear on television or radio. Take the time to call in expert help – the DairyCo press office is on-hand and available.

Think about the following:

- What are the key words or phrases that you want to make sure you communicate?
- Have no more than three key messages that you want to communicate
- What evidence do you have to support these statements? (Have case studies 'up your sleeve')
- How can you give a concise 'sound bite' which delivers these messages?

Write your messages down, and then say them aloud – how they look on paper is not always how they sound. And when it comes to the interview, don't be afraid to repeat yourself – it often takes the viewer or listener a few times before they take in what you are saying.

Here is a reminder of the key messages we have agreed as an industry...

- **The health and welfare of our cows is our number one priority.**
Keeping our cows happy and healthy is good for them and good for us.
- **Dairy farmers care for the environment.**
Dairy farms are responsible for less than 2% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions
- **Dairy farmers are custodians of the countryside.**
We don't just look after our cows; we go to great lengths to preserve wildlife too.
- **Dairy farming is high-tech.**
We use sophisticated technology to help ensure the health of our cows and the quality of their milk.
- **Our cows produce around 11 billion litres of milk a year.**
The healthy and nutritious dairy products that millions of people in this country enjoy every year start with us.

Answering the questions

If you decide to undertake the interview, remember you are the expert. The media have come to you because you 'know your stuff' and/or have firsthand knowledge or experience of the subject matter. This means that you can, to a certain extent, control the interview. For example:

“No, that's not the case, what actually happens on my dairy farm is...”

The first and most important thing to remember is that questions are the start of a negotiation.

You and the interviewer have different goals – he or she wants to get answers to his or her questions, but you want to get your carefully crafted messages across. A media interview is NOT like everyday conversation – it's a game or 'deal' which you strike by agreeing to do the interview. But the better prepared you are, the more likely you are to 'win' something out of the 'deal'!

Unfortunately, you can't ignore the question (although you will see some politicians do this!), so answer it in a way that gives you an opportunity to introduce your key messages for example:

“That’s a good question, but the real issue here is...”

On the whole, you will have more knowledge than the interviewer, so you have the opportunity to lead the interviewer. They want to get as much out of you as they can.

Don't simply answer with yes or no. Be concise, but use every question as an opportunity to get your messages across – take advantage of the opportunity to 'bridge' from an answer to one of your key messages.

“Yes, but that is only part of the story...”

Don't answer hypothetical or 'what if' questions, simply refocus on what is.

“I can't answer what might or might not be, but what I can say is that currently...”

Make sure that you are positive rather than negative:

“Many farmers are now....” rather than
“Unfortunately most farmers are not”

Don't say 'no comment' and if you don't know the answer, don't make it up...say you don't know but move the conversation to an area where you feel more comfortable:

“I'm sorry, I don't know the answer to that, but what I do know is that...”

Use your own experiences to illustrate what you are saying:

“On my farm, for example, we...”

Don't let inaccuracies go uncorrected

“If I could just go back and address one of the points...”

If it is not a live recording ask when the programme will be aired, find out the date and time.

Don't forget to let industry colleagues know when and where they can listen to the interview.

DairyCo is always keen to hear how dairy farmers are helping to promote a positive image of the industry so don't forget to give us a call.

✓ Do...

- respond quickly to media enquiries even if you do not accept the interview
- keep returning to your key messages
- stay positive
- relax (but not too relaxed!)
- be polite and professional at all times
- where appropriate, use stories to help illustrate points
- be careful of the word 'Yes'. If the question makes an incorrect statement, put it right before moving the interview on

Remember your ABCs

- ◇ A - Acknowledge the question being asked (don't ignore it)
- ◇ B - Bridge to your key message
- ◇ C - Communicate your key message

✘ Don't...

- let your words be twisted
- interrupt the interviewer
- become angry or offensive
- forget - there's no such thing as "off the record"
- talk to fill silences – that's the interviewer's job
- use jargon or too many figures
- try to 'win' a challenging interview
 - aim for a 'draw'

If in doubt

call the DairyCo Press Office on 024 7647 8888

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DairyCo

Agriculture and Horticulture
Development Board
Stoneleigh Park
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
CV8 2TL

T: +44 247 669 2051

E: info@dairyco.ahdb.org.uk

www.dairyco.org.uk

DairyCo is a division of the Agriculture and
Horticulture Development Board



Agriculture & Horticulture
DEVELOPMENT BOARD