

April 12, 2010

USDA New Media Best Practices

USDA [Blog](#):

The Department maintains One USDA Blog featuring stories and updates from each mission, agency and office. The USDA Office of Communications New Media and Web Services Division manage the Blog.

Blogs are more personal and informal in tone than a traditional news release, and may be a forum for conversation and ongoing engagement. They should also be attributed to Agency personnel; authorship is not limited to Agency officials or leadership.

Great blog content will provide a unique perspective to USDA programs, tell a story that is often not heard in the Newsroom or promotes an initiative or program to the public in a new or interesting way.

Process

Agency public affairs personnel, or other programs, submit Blog entries to OC New Media. Entries should be reviewed and approved through Agency communications clearance channels before submitted to OC.

Proposed entries should be included in the Agency Week Ahead document submitted to the Office of Communications each week for consideration.

Format

Entries should be 200 – 400 words in length. Photos or videos may be embedded in blog posts. When submitted to OC for posting on the USDA Blog, the entry should be in a Word document using 12 point Times New Roman black font, single spaced with zero spacing before and after paragraphs. Hyperlinks should be applied to relevant words or phrases in the text such as the Agency's Website, program Webpage, published press release or other resources. Photos should be attached separately and not embedded in the word doc itself. Captions must also be tied to the photos provided and can be included in the Word document for convenience.

USDA [Facebook](#):

The Department maintains One USDA Facebook Fan page featuring updates and resources from each mission, agency and office. The USDA Office of Communications New Media manages the Facebook Fan page with the support of the USDA Facebook Team.

The Facebook Team is comprised of two individuals per agency whose static IP addresses have been cleared to access the Website. These individuals are responsible for posting links to Blog posts discussing Agency activities or issues, promoting relevant resources and scheduling "events" to inform Fans.

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This group will coordinate content with OC New Media should there be a special event, time specific messaging or other circumstances that requires more prominent placement on the USDA Fan page. Blog content updates or event schedules need not be cleared through OC before posting.

Content posted to the USDA Facebook page should not be unique information as many users and USDA personnel are not able to access the site.

Twitter Accounts:

Agencies manage their own Twitter accounts after receiving approval from OC. Information should follow the Twitter Best Practices document.

Additional Lessons Learned:

- Do not retweet third-party news articles
- Do not respond directly to a follower, instead post a new tweet with the relevant answer or information as appropriate

YouTube Accounts:

Agencies are not required to but may choose to manage their own YouTube accounts after receiving approval from OC and the [Broadcast Management and Technology Center](#). All photos must be fully accessible and appropriate for public dissemination. Field, state or regional offices and programs should not establish separate accounts.

Photo Sharing:

The Department maintains one USDA Flickr photo sharing account that presents images of all activities, programs and events to the public.

The Office of Communications [Creative Service Center](#) must approve photos for publication. Agencies must provide captions for each photograph.