World Organisation for Animal Health

中华人民共和国农业农村部
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China

From the People of Japan

Australian Aid

Media Training

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Worst case scenario



- Breaking character
- Sitting awkwardly on side of table
- Getting aggressive
- Thinking that a journalist will only ask pre-agreed questions
- Doubling down on a misstatement rather than correcting it

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fq8E84PgP

The "sweet spot" for media training

Underprepared:

- Nervous, anxious
- Speaking quickly
- Awkward, jittery movement of body, hands, eyes
- Unclear, wrong calls-to-action





The sweet spot:

- Confident, engaging
- 2-way conversation
- Clear, insightful with examples
- Relevant, dynamic calls-to-action

Overprepared:

- Robotic, unyielding
- Speaking without engaging
- Disingenuous, “blank” tone
- Clichéd, unmoving calls-to-action



The 4 Cs

1

Credibility

You should share verifiable facts early and acknowledge uncertainty.

2

Control

You should set and stick to your agenda and not speculate.

3

Consistency

You should coordinate across teams and share clear, regular updates.

4

Compassion

You should recognize fears, concerns, and livelihoods.

Preparing for an interview

- What **type** of interview? (live, broadcast, radio, print, briefing etc)
- What **date and time** (or what deadline)?
- What **questions/topics** are they interested in?
- What **editorial agenda** does their publication have?
- What are the **3 main messages** YOU want to communicate during the interview?
- What **evidence or stories** do you have to support these messages?
- Does your communications team already have **resources** to help you prepare?



What are journalists looking for?

- ✓ Information
- ✓ Opinion
- ✓ Facts
- ✓ Figures
- ✓ Examples



KISS - Keep It Simple to Succeed!

- **Statement, proof, reminder**
  - Use active verbs (e.g. transforming, implementing, changing)
  - Give examples where you can
  - Have a succinct, punchy ending
- **Don’t speculate**
  - Get the basic facts out first
  - Don’t be afraid to state the obvious
  - Be concise
  - Caveat appropriately when uncertainty still exists
  - Don’t try to be funny or ironic
  - Treat everything as “on the record”
- **Stay calm**
  - Listen to the questions being asked
  - Speak slowly and authoritatively



Bridging 1-2-3

1. Listen for a tough/ trick question	2. Apply a bridging response	3. Reframe using key message
• *Yes or no? I just need a one-word answer.* • *So what you're really saying is ...?* • *So what you really mean is... ?* • *Let's be honest. It's really about XYZ, isn't it?* • *Why do you think they said that / made that decision?*	• *I wish it were so simple as to give a yes/no answer, but the reality is more complex. Let me explain...* • *The facts /evidence suggests that...* • *The real issue here is ...* • *What I do know is / what I do find interesting is ...* • *Let me re-emphasize something I said earlier about ...* • *It's interesting how often this comes up, but the reality is...* • *The question that you should ask is ...* • *Yes, I know that's what some people think, but...* • *I hear that said a lot...* • *Before I answer your question, I'd like to correct/nuance something you just said.* • *"The process is still underway so it would be better to speak to that once the outcomes are clear..."* • *That's one way to see it, but it also fails to consider...* • *I don't understand how that is relevant here...* • *I'm not in a position to speculate about others / the future...* • *That isn't my area of expertise, but what I do know is...* • *I don't have that information to hand, but what I do know is*	• *Key message #1* • *Key message #2* • *Key message #3*





In Summary - If an Issue/Crisis Emerges

- **Engage early, even when you don't have all the answers.**
  - Explain the cost of silence: rumors spread, unofficial sources fill the gap, and public confidence can erode. Acknowledge what is known, what is not yet confirmed, and when more information will be available.
- **Lead with empathy, not technical jargon.**
  - Start by acknowledging public concerns and the impact on farmers, animal owners, communities, and livelihoods. Translate scientific information into accessible language.
- **Communicate three clear messages.**
  - Prepare three essential points: what is happening, what authorities or experts are doing, and what the public should do. Bridge back to these points without ignoring the journalist's question.
- **Be transparent without speculating.**
  - Distinguish verified facts from uncertainty. Avoid guessing, false reassurance, defensiveness, or saying "no comment" without explanation. Protect confidential information and respect protocols.
- **Build relationships before a crisis and maintain them throughout.**
  - Understand journalists' deadlines, establish credible spokespersons, provide regular updates, and coordinate messaging across animal health, public health, and government agencies.

Small Group Exercise – Scenario #1

- **Several poultry farms in your region have reported sudden bird deaths. Highly pathogenic avian influenza is suspected, but laboratory confirmation is pending.**

- **A journalist calls and asks: "We've heard that a dangerous bird flu outbreak is spreading and authorities are keeping it secret. Is this true? Should people stop buying chicken?”**

- **Group task:**
  - Discuss the first steps you should take and the timings for each.
  - Develop a 30-second initial response that acknowledges the concern, communicates verified information, avoids speculation, and promises a concrete next update.

Small Group Exercise - Scenario #2

- **A widely shared social media post claims that all poultry products are unsafe and that authorities are hiding human infections. Farmers are angry, and journalists are asking whether the rumors are true.**

- **Your team has 20 minutes before a scheduled media briefing.**

- **Group task:**
  - Prepare a short media response containing three key messages, one practical action for the public, and a plan for how to address the misinformation without amplifying it.