AGCJ 404: Communicating Agricultural Information to the Public

Week #11: Press Releases

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Determining the News
- A faculty member in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences receives an NSF grant for more than $500,000.
- Is that news?
- Should it be in the newspaper?
- What newspaper?
- How will it get there?

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News Stories
- From their own writers
- From news wires (AP, UPI, Knight-Ridder, Reuters)
- Syndicated columnists
- Press releases

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Writing News Releases
- Free publicity for your organization
- Develop a positive relationship with your newspaper
- A part of many jobs
- News style helps in writing company or organization newsletters

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Objectives
- Given a description of an event, determine if it is newsworthy based on the common determinants of news
- Given a situation, write a press release using the inverted pyramid style

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News Determinants
- The yardstick an editor uses to determine what portion of the day's news she/he will use
- The higher the rating the more likely they will use it
- Rating is determined by the following questions
Is it timely?
- If not timely, it is a prediction or history
- Event has just happened or in the near future
- In agriculture seasonal basis must be considered

Is it local?
- Nearness to the audience
- Local stories
- Local slant to national stories
- Especially important to smaller local papers

Is it important?
- Magnitude and significance of the idea, event, or situation
- Large numbers of people or large areas
- Prominence of persons involved
- Who and how many will be affected

Is it policy?
- Ask about the local paper’s policy
- Ask for format
- Political slant
- Appropriate editor/contact

What makes news?
- Conflict/controversy
- Progress
- Unusual/novel
- Human Interest

Writing Press Releases
- Inverted pyramid
- Leads
- Quotes
- Plugs
The Inverted Pyramid

- Answers before explanations
- Summaries before details
- Conclusions before discussions
- General statement before specifics

Most Important Information
Supporting Data and Examples
Least Important Data

Leads

- First paragraph
- Must summarize the story and capture reader interest
- Contains the most important information of the who, what, when, where, why, and how

Quotes

- Important part of news articles
- Use quotes to keep from editorializing
- First quote: Use title, first name, last name
- Subsequent quotes: Last name only

Plugs

- Include information about your organization at the end of your article
- Types of information
  - Aims and goals
  - Major activities
  - Membership
  - Cooperating organizations

Press Release Types

- Advance - written prior to an event’s occurrence to inform people that the event is coming & what to expect
- Cover - written immediately after an event’s occurrence to tell people what happened
- Follow-up - written at some future time to tell people the consequences of an event

Types of Leads

- Summary (Big Six: Who, What, Where, When, Why & How)
- Rhetorical Devices
- Novelty
- Question
- Quotation
- Suspended Interest
- Sequence
- Anything Goes
Summary (Big Six)

- "Yesterday, Joe Smith deposited $2,500 that he is saving for his first year in college by selling the fat barrows raised with 10 acres of corn and soybeans produced on his father's farm."

Rhetorical Devices

- Participle phrase:
  - "Working 10 acres of corn and beans and hogging it off, Joe Smith raised $2,500 for college."
- Infinitive phrase:
  - "To raise $2,500 for his college education . . ."
- Noun phrase:
  - "That a boy can get college money, $2,500 to be exact, . . ."
- Prepositional phrase:
  - "In a successful effort to raise . . ."

Novelty

- Punch lead:
  - "Hogs and corn assured Joe Smith of his first year in college."
- Descriptive:
  - "Hot sun and hard work faced Joe Smith as he worked enthusiastically to earn $2,500 . . ."
- Contrast:
  - "When his neighbors fell in the slop with their swine production, Joe Smith . . ."

Question

- "How are you going to keep them down on the farm when 10 acres of corn and a bunch of hogs can put a fellow in college?"

Quotation

- Use quotes to keep from editorializing
- First quote: Use title, first name, last name
- Subsequent quotes: Last name only
  - "I never knew hogs and corn would net so much." That was the banker's statement when Joe Smith deposited $2,500 toward a . . .

Suspended Interest

- "No one believed he could do it. He even doubted his own ability. But . . . it is now an accomplished fact."
Sequence

- "First it was 10 acres of properly fertilized hybrid corn and soybeans. Then it was a bunch of feeder pigs. Now it is $2,500 in the bank."

Anything Goes

- "This little pig went to market and little Joe stayed at home, but not for long. Soon he will enroll in college."

Press Release Format

- Letterhead
- Contact Information
- Dates
- Slug
- Dateline
- Spacing
- More/End

Assignment and Evaluation

- Press Release Lab
- Press Release Project
- Final Exam
Additional PR Basics

- The message
  - What
  - "Feel"
  - Fit
- The Audience
  - Media outlets
  - Sub-groups within the general population

PR Basics

- Media
  - Fit message
  - Fit audience
  - Multiple “touches” with audience
- Print – complicated messages
- Radio – short topics
- Intranet – detail

News Release

- “Bread and butter” of public relations
- Still a basic news story
- Company name in 2nd paragraph
- Boilerplate at the end
- Contact information
- Headline

News Release Format

- Boilerplate paragraph at the end:
  - Founded in 1959, Sea Ray is the world’s largest manufacturer of superior quality pleasure boats headquartered in Knoxville, Tenn. With more than 50 different models ranging from 18 to 68 feet, Sea Ray makes a boat for every need. Each is built with a unique Sea Ray commitment to quality, craftsmanship and excellence throughout.

Basic News Release Types

- Announcements
  - Events
  - Promotions
  - New locations/branches
- Community activities
  - Blood drive
  - Donations
  - Participation

Basic News Release Types

- Media packets and related materials
  - New product
  - New service
  - Localize (fill-in-the-blanks)
News Release Packets

- Set of news releases on a given topic or event
- Newspapers may sell ads around it
- Designed for smaller media outlets to use as a series
- Program or project information

News Packets

- Photos
  - Event or program specific
  - Product shots
  - Generic
  - Royalty-free art
- Graphics
  - Illustrates program or product
  - Logos

Example

Valent U.S.A. Corporation News
5/20/2002

Knack® IGR Controls Scale in Florida Citrus

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. (May 20, 2002) – Citrus growers in Florida have a new tool in Knack® Insect Growth Regulator, which controls many types of scale.

Knack was recently granted a 2(ee) label to control chaff and glover scale in Florida citrus. Knack, marketed by Valent U.S.A. Corporation, currently has a supplemental label to control certain types of scale. The 2(ee) recommendation was necessary so that growers could use Knack for control of all types of scale.

“Legally, growers can now put the product out for any scale and control them,” said John Altom, field market development specialist in Florida. “This allows the growers to know that Knack controls all of these insects.”

Altom said scale can mean bad news because they blemish fruit, rendering it unmarketable or only sellable at a reduced price. Sixteen ounces of Knack per acre can take care of scale in a single application.

“Other products have you coming back for a second application, but Knack is a one-time deal,” Altom said, adding that the product is best applied in the crawler stage. “It keeps scale down. No other products have long-term control like Knack.”

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Other Valent products for Florida crops include Danitol® 2.4 EC Spray, Esteem® Ant Bait, DiPel® Biological Insecticide, Orthene® 97 Insecticide, ProGibb® Plant Growth Regulator and XenTari® Biological Insecticide.

Valent U.S.A. Corporation markets and sells herbicides, insecticides, bio-insecticides, insect growth regulators, nematicides, baits and plant growth regulators for the agricultural, horticultural, turf, ornamental and professional pest control markets. For more information about Valent products for specialty crops, Valent U.S.A. Corporation and our full product line, call 1-800-6-VALENT (800-682-5368) or visit the Valent Web site at www.valent.com.