

AG COMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the Agriculture Institute of Florida

Second Quarter 2010

At A Glance

- What: 2010 AIF Candidates Forum
- When: Sept 24, 2010, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Where: Orange County Convention Center, Orlando
- Reservations: (863) 675-2144 or e-mail candidatesforum@aginstitute.org

2010 AIF Candidates Forum Reservations Being Taken

For more than 30 years, the Agriculture Institute and Farm Credit have brought candidates for Florida's top offices, including governor, chief financial officer, attorney general and commissioner of agriculture, together with members of Florida's ag industry for a luncheon that allows candidates to express their views on top ag issues

and for producers to ask questions directly of the candidates.

This year's event is being held in conjunction with the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association's statewide event, The Landscape Show, Sept. 24 at the Orange County Convention Center. Cost to attend is \$75 per person

(\$750 per table of 10). Corporate table sponsorships are available and include recognition at the event and a priority seating table for 10 guests for \$1,000. For information call 863-675-2144. To be included on the invitation mailing list, please send an e-mail to candidatesforum@aginstitute.org

Know True Agendas Before You Donate

By Rod Hemphill, Florida Farm Bureau

Americans love their pets. Market research has shown that almost half of pet owners consider their pets to be family members.

There are more than 72 million pet dogs in the United States. And nearly 82 million pet cats. Each year, Americans spent \$366 per household for veterinary care for those animals.

The time and money that animal lovers contribute to local chapters of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and humane societies for animal shelters, rescue and adoption reflects our collective concern, affection and enthusiasm for companion animals.

Those kindly feelings, unfortunately, can leave us vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation.

"Money raised for one cause, which we support, can be diverted to other causes, which we oppose," observed Scot Eubanks, an assistant director of Agricultural Policy for Florida Farm Bureau. "There are animal rights organizations that would have well-meaning people believe they are contributing to local animal shelters when, in reality, they are donating to an organiza-

tion that has a completely different agenda."

Consider the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the largest and richest animal rights lobbying organization in the world.

"Do not confuse HSUS with local humane societies and SPCA affiliates that operate local animal shelters," Eubanks warns. "HSUS does not take in strays or care for neglected or abused animals. It does not run spay and neuter programs. It operates no animal shelters."

Indeed, while it claims to support such activities – and while it has frequently used images of puppies and kittens in its promotional material – it provides little more than lip service to hands-on work that benefits individual animals. In 2006 it contributed only 4.2 percent of its budget to such hands-on work.

So, what does HSUS do?

HSUS has a budget of more than \$130 million to run campaigns aimed at curbing meat, egg and dairy production in the United States. If you have been in Florida for awhile, you will recall HSUS was a major sponsor of the Pregnant Pig Amendment, which elevated what had been a standard animal husbandry

Did You Know?

According to the Center for Consumer Freedom, a poll taken in February 2010 found that 71 percent of those polled believed HSUS is an umbrella group that represents local humane societies and 59 percent believe HSUS contributes most of its money to local humane animal. The irony is that HSUS spent 10 times more money in its effort to pass Proposition 2 (Standards for Confining Farm Animals initiative) in California than what it donated to local pet shelters there.

Where to go for help

- www.AnimalScam.com
- www.Activistcash.com
- www.consumerfreedom.com



practice into our state's constitution. It banned gestation crates for sows.

Over the protests of Florida agricultural producers, voters adopted this amendment in 2002 following an intense media campaign by HSUS and its confederates that employed images of children and dogs more frequently than it did swine. It mattered not to HSUS and its partners that only two small swine producers in Florida used gestation crates, or that the use of the crates was a generally accepted animal husbandry practice endorsed by veterinarian organizations.

The Florida campaign was a first step in

Know True Agendas, continued on back page

About This Issue

The Agriculture Institute of Florida's newsletter occasionally focuses on a specific theme. We hope the insights and experiences of the AIF membership can be helpful to all of us who work in Florida agriculture. This issue focuses on **activists and the threats they pose**, plus solutions on how to deal with them.

Education Helped Wine Company Make Heads and Tails of Campaign

A little education and effort indeed can turn the tide with an activists' movement.

You may recall in January when Yellow Tail Wine donated \$100,000 to the Humane Society of the U.S. for its "Tail for Tails" partnership campaign. Special Yellow Tail displays bearing the HSUS name and logo were in stores nationwide promoting the campaign.

Agriculture spoke up – loudly – and guess what happened? The "tails" program ended abruptly. Advocates for agriculture began a viral campaign effort that started with a letter from the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance

to Yellow Tail that unveiled the true HSUS agenda. The Alliance spread its opposition through Twitter and it spread wildly from there to various ag organizations.

Not long after, there was a Facebook page that featured photos of Yellow Tail Wine being poured down a toilet and fifth-generation South Dakota rancher Troy Hadrick delivering a heartfelt videotaped message in front of his cattle. He expressed disgust with the campaign as he poured a bottle of wine onto the snow.

Education, continued on back page

[yellow tail]



About The Ag Institute of Florida

Established in 1970, the Ag Institute of Florida is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, encouraging and empowering individuals and organizations to communicate more effectively on behalf of Florida agriculture.

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Persuasive Communication Strategies 101

By Katie Abrams
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Activist groups who target many industries use persuasive communication strategies to create turbulent waters. The big surprise: they're actually good at it.

The animal agriculture industry is one such industry currently enduring what could be seen as a public relations crisis, in which animal agriculture opponent organizations, such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), are successfully changing and eliminating segments of animal agriculture in some parts of the country.

However, this is not a threat the animal agriculture industry faces alone. The entire agriculture industry is seeking ways to stay abreast of activist groups and reach more audiences who, quite frankly, have received much of their knowledge on agriculture from these groups.

Web sites are a great tool to tap into new audiences, but some strategies of persuasion are often overlooked. In short, getting the content up there and making it look pretty isn't enough.

A study I conducted last year may be insightful for those looking to refocus their Web site campaigns on communicating persuasively with audiences whose bread and butter, ironically, is *not* agriculture.

The study was based on one of the most well-known theories of persuasion called the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Without getting into the nitty-gritty, the theory states that persuasive communication works differently depending on how involved an audience is with the topic. The higher the level of involvement, the more likely they will consider the arguments made.

But let's face it; most of the time, people are not highly involved with agricultural issues. When a person has less or low involvement with an issue, they don't have time to really think about

a message and consider it carefully. They make decisions quickly and use what the theory calls peripheral cues, such as photos/images, speaker characteristics or simply noting the number of arguments made (more must be better ... right?).

This study applied ELM to compare the persuasive communication strategies on the Web sites of two organizations communicating about animal agriculture: the HSUS and the Animal Agriculture Alliance. The data suggested that the HSUS online campaign appeals to both high- and low-involvement audiences on the issue of animal agriculture, while the Alliance campaign appeals primarily to high-involvement audiences. Surprisingly, HSUS used far more science and university-based sources to back up their arguments. They also used more imagery throughout the site.

Agricultural organizations consistently try to solve the problem of negative agriculture messages by *educating or informing* the public. While this strategy is useful when done well, it cannot be the sole effort because most people are not motivated or highly involved in animal agriculture.

Some Tips

Here are recommendations for your organization's online communication efforts:

- **Use two-sided with refute**
Research shows persuasion is most effective when you acknowledge an opposing viewpoint and directly refute it along with providing your viewpoint.
- **Cite your sources**
Consider providing a list of sources and numbering them to create a peripheral cue for low-involvement audiences
- **Integrate photos and video throughout messages**
Don't just have them on their own separate part of the site. Put them in tandem with your text content.
- **Reorganize by audience**
Tailor messages and the structure of messages based on audiences' needs and ability/motivation. Use more farmer stories: research shows consumers trust them.

Pinellas County: A Harbinger Of The Future?

By Jim Spratt, Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association

Abraham Lincoln once said "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed."

Every sector of Florida's agricultural industry fights this dynamic every day. Undoubtedly, as the population and workforce in this country move further from an agrarian lifestyle, public sentiment will be more difficult to capture.

In January, with the strong backing of the Sierra Club of Florida, Pinellas County commissioners adopted one of Florida's most stringent fertilizer-use ordinances. Ignoring objections from lawn and landscape professionals, the fertilizer industry and UF/IFAS science, the county chose to penalize businesses, trampling

right over the top of commerce. They even picked up on Sierra Club talking points that questioned the integrity of UF/IFAS and researchers.

In short, the Sierra Club ran the public policy process! Through venomous objection to science, blistering editorials and emotionally charged pictures of dead fish and green slime, the Sierra Club effectively used emotions and a strong arm to win an illogical argument.

The ordinance focuses on the urban/residential application of fertilizers and is not slated to impact the agricultural operations or golf courses. It bans the application of nitrogen and phosphorus during the "rainy season" (June 1-Sept. 30).

Moreover, the ordinance

takes the bold approach of banning the retail sale of fertilizers containing nitrogen and phosphorus during the same period. It is important to note, there isn't scientific evidence to suggest water quality will improve based on the ban. However, the argument that has been commonly adopted is if fertilizer isn't being applied then it can't hurt water quality! The local government admitted it wouldn't enforce the ban, thus giving justification for the ban on retail sales as an enforcement procedure.

So how does Florida agriculture take on a huge entity such as the Sierra Club? Quite frankly, we wish we had the answer. Our funding couldn't hold a match to Sierra's fund-
Pinellas County, continued on next page

Smile: You Just May Be On Camera

By Scott Wallin, Florida Dairy Farmers

The trend is a frightening one: undercover cameras filming despicable acts in agriculture, specifically dairy. All of it based in special interest group activism.

For the second time this year, the industry was dealt a public relations nightmare when cameras rolling at a dairy recently in Ohio captured footage of animal abuse. Mercy for Animals used the footage to advance its anti-dairy agenda at three Ohio news conferences not long after the video was filmed.

Anti-agriculture groups are using undercover videos because it captures the attention of mainstream media and can live forever on YouTube and other popular websites.

This certainly was the thought process of Mercy for Animals. It mattered little to the organization that the “mercenary” who abused the animals was rightfully charged with 12 counts of cruelty to animals.

We say throw the book at him. Some say literally.

There isn't a dairy farmer in Florida or anywhere in the country who can give a justification for mistreating animals like this. Dairy farmers are as outraged by this video as the public. Maybe more.

I have many issues with videos such as this and a similar one that preceded it in New York in January. I just have a heck of a hard time accepting that this is “true undercover video” and that these people were “caught in the act.” Instead, I lean more toward the theory that this footage was staged to advance agendas. The people rolling the camera in either video didn't do anything to stop the abuse, making them as accountable as those who directly administered the abuse.

I've been on too many of our Florida dairy farms and know too many of our Florida farmers to think that this constitutes common practice. I see farmers going to the extreme with animal care. In fact, many farms are beginning to adopt the new National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) program's practices. Those standards disavow malicious striking or

dragging animals. The FARM program, developed by National Milk Producers Federation, is designed to promote the best practices in animal care that consumers have come to expect from the dairy sector.

Farmer-funded dairy checkoff offices such as Florida Dairy Farmers took several steps to respond to this latest video and the media coverage that followed:

- Communicators developed messaging that takes a strong position against the actions in the video. American Dairy Association Mideast and Ohio Dairy Producers Association issued a joint statement, conducted numerous media interviews and remained in regular contact with media in the area. That statement appears on www.floridamilk.com

- Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) distributed an e-mail encouraging dairy advocates to engage in online dialogue with consumers about this topic.

- Coverage of the issue was monitored in traditional media, as well as electronic/social media.

The checkoff is developing additional resources to help producers protect themselves from being victims of undercover video schemes. More materials are under development, including a brochure for dairy producers explaining how to protect the farm image in a time of increased public scrutiny over dairy animal care.

Of course, the best way to avoid issues around undercover videos is to be proactive. That means educating employees about proper management practices and observing them at various times to make sure those practices are being followed.

Some dairy farmers have asked how they should respond if asked about the videos. The best answer is to tell their own story. Dairy farmers can help reassure people that the activities depicted in the video are not accepted industry practices and that ill treatment of animals is deplorable and bad business. Simply tell them what you do.

That can prove that many times, the camera does indeed lie.

The 'Other' Viewpoint

“Our goal is the abolition of all animal agriculture.”

— Humane Society of the US coordinator John Goodwin

“Our long-term goal is to rid the world of animal agriculture and convert everyone to a plant-based diet.”

— PETA outreach director Bruce Friedrich

“It would be better if human beings would stop killing, eating, enslaving, and exploiting animals and I'm personally committed to that very philosophy.”

— Whole Foods Market CEO John Mackey



“If that hideousness (foot and mouth disease) came here, it wouldn't be any more hideous for the animals — they are all bound for a ghastly death anyway. But it would wake up consumers. I openly hope that it comes here. It will bring economic harm only for those who profit from giving people heart attacks and giving animals a concentration camp-like existence. It would be good for animals, good for human health and good for the environment.”

— Ingrid Newkirk, PETA co-founder



Did You Know? More than 90 colleges now offer animal law courses compared with only a handful 10 years ago. The growing interest in animal law is compared to the 1970s explosion of interest in environmental law.

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ing. For now, we grin and bear it and work to spotlight science-based information in the hopes of gaining consumer trust.

Second, we engage our local members to get involved. Sierra is strong because of its vast grassroots network at all levels of government. We are typically visible at the state and federal levels and we have to change our focus!

Pinellas County's ordinance accomplished two precedents. First, the county ignored best management practices developed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Although the ordi-

nance did not apply to agricultural operations or golf courses, do not fool yourself into thinking these folks aren't feverishly trying to figure out how to undermine those BMP programs. Second, the retail sales ban should have us concerned about the next step. Obviously, if only Pinellas bans the sale of fertilizer what's to keep people from crossing the bridge to Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando, Polk or Manatee counties to get “the good stuff”?

The Sierra Club has long had the intention of stopping any applications of fertilizer for all uses, not just home lawns. How long before a county bans the sale or application

for a longer period of time? How long before they attack fertilizer sales to golf courses or agriculture?

Think it can't happen? Consider this, the latest in a long line of environmental lawsuits, *Earth Justice et al. v Environmental Protection Agency*. The now infamous *Nutrient Criteria* lawsuit that has everyone in Florida seriously concerned about the costs, the ability to meet the proposed standards, the science behind the standards and the reality of what specific nutrient criteria means for current and future land uses in Florida.

Mix that with emotionally charged activists and a struggling

economy and we are in the fight of our lives to justify why we are so important to Florida's economy and way of life.

The task isn't easy or cheap. We need a facelift! Actually, we need an “Extreme Makeover!”

We know several Florida counties are considering similar ordinances. We know certain groups have the ultimate goal of eliminating all fertilizer use. We know the Sierra Club has renewed its commitment to fight. We know as more local governments consider ordinances similar to Pinellas County's, the Sierra Club will only become more brazen in its quest to impact our businesses.

7 Principles to Successful Crisis Management

By Robert Cadogan,
Manager, Media Practice of Burson-Marsteller

As communication professionals, we can all agree that businesses and other entities operate in a highly-charged environment, which is more conducive to crises when compared to other times in modern history. Why? Simply put, the interaction of traditional media, digital communications, public policymakers, activist groups and plaintiff attorneys has taken adversarial scrutiny to new heights with alarming speed.

Moreover, we contend with the general public's distrust of corporations, fueled by high-profile investigations and shocking corporate meltdowns combined with rising shareholder expectations and pressure on government to serve as both watchdog and enforcer – surefire ingredients for a very potent cocktail.

As a result, we face a diverse spectrum of potential crises combined with a deeply-narrow window of opportunity to successfully manage them. Increased corporate attention to compliance and enterprise risk management is crucial to managing vulnerabilities, but nothing can make an organization crisis-proof. When a crisis hits, effective response requires unprecedented levels of preparation, swiftness, foresight, and agility.

An organization can take steps to interrupt this process at any time, but a “wait-and-see” approach has its inherent dangers since crises that once took days or even months to emerge can now escalate exponentially within hours. In a crisis situation the calculus is very clear: the later the intervention the lower the chances of resolution and the higher the cost of success. This includes not only measurable costs such as fines, litigation, government relations and public relations expenditures, but the hidden cost of senior management's diverted attention.

At Burson-Marsteller, we believe seven principles, if applied rigorously, can carry an organization successfully through crisis.

1. Put public health and safety first. A simple but fundamental rule for any crisis involving a threat to life or health. It also reflects the fact that what's best for public health and safety also will be in the company's best long-term interests.
2. Respond to stakeholder perceptions and expectations. What worked to resolve one crisis may fail badly when applied to another that seems similar because perceptions and expectations are unique to every organization.

Burson-Marsteller advocates evidence-based strategies that include survey research to objectively understand stakeholder perceptions and identify the actions and messages that resonate with those who are affected.

3. Take appropriate “ownership” of the crisis. Ownership means knowing where your stakeholders think the buck stops.

4. Communicate immediately. In a world of information overload, immediately means now. Delay in communication will be perceived as lack of concern, confusion, or worse, an attempt to

stonewall. Often an initial statement need only demonstrate that the organization is aware, concerned, and taking tangible action.

5. Lead the target. Focus the response not only where the crisis is now, but where it is going.

6. Be honest and transparent. The key is to say what you can say and explain clearly why certain information cannot be provided.

7. Beware the “false dawn” of premature recovery. The fact that a situation no longer tops the news does not mean it is no longer top-of-mind. “When will it be over?” is a question only a company's stakeholders can answer.

While the types of potential crises we face are diverse, experience shows they tend to evolve in a similar pattern:

1. **Surprise** – failure to anticipate, recognize, or manage
2. **Insufficient Communication** – due to incomplete data, legal concerns, paralysis, or anger
3. **Escalating Stakeholder Demands** – media, others want to know who, what, why, what's being done, who is on point
4. **Expectation Gap** – information vacuum filled by speculation, criticism, alarm, anger while perceived leadership is void
5. **Loss of Reputation/Loss of Control** – stakeholders lose confidence, feel betrayed, and others drive discussion, prescribe solutions

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a national animal rights agenda aimed at obstructing meat and dairy producers. It has since resulted in the passing of anti-agriculture initiatives in Arizona, Colorado and California. HSUS also wants to ban the use of animals in biomedical research labs, eliminate rodeos, zoos and circuses and put an end to hunting. HSUS has a record of employing deceptive practices while tapping animal lovers for funds it uses to pursue its radical animal rights agenda.

In 2007, when NFL quarterback Michael Vick was indicted on dog fighting charges, HSUS raised money online, promising it would go to care for the dogs seized in the case. The New York Times later reported that, rather than caring for the animals, HSUS president Wayne Pacelle had told its reporter his group was recommending the dogs be put down.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, HSUS raised a reported \$34 million to reunite lost pets with their owners. According to an investigative report by WSB-TV in Atlanta, less than \$7 million of that money was actually spent on activities related to Katrina.

Such potential for deception calls for caution on the part of all donors.

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Yellow Tail USA began to listen and responded with its own Tweet: “Lots of conversation here today; we're listening. Check back soon, we'll be announcing news shortly on our [tails] for Tails program.”

It wasn't long after that the campaign took an immediate turn with this update from Yellow Tail: “We've decided to use our \$100K gift to aid animal rescue.”

Yellow Tail Wines USA responded to consumers by saying their HSUS insight “was very helpful to us – in fact, it prompted us to specifically choose the areas where we'd most like to celebrate animals. ...We hope that you will understand that this allocation of money is a direct result of hearing your concerns.”

Chalk up a win for agricultural activism!



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