COMMUNICATING SCIENCE: Tips for Communicating Well

Be Clear
- Don’t use jargon or acronyms unless you define them first
- Use metaphors or analogies
- Use numbers and be explicit
- Utilize white space to break up text

Be Concise
- Don’t include unnecessary information
- Revise, revise, revise! If you can eliminate a word, always do it.

Make People Care
- Mention stakeholders
- Discuss the values of your audience
- Establish credibility

Before you start, always ask yourself:
Who is my audience? Always write with your audience in mind.
What is the goal of this communication?

General Rules:

- Generalizations => Details
- Known Information => New Information
- Most Important => Least Important

Building Credibility: Remember, credibility is all about the audience’s perception!

Expertise: Speak at their level, but don’t oversimplify. Share details relevant to the presentation and audience.

Trustworthiness: Discuss multiple sides of an issue. This shows your audience that you are knowledgeable and are not just pushing a specific agenda.

Group Membership: Mention relevant groups that the audience might relate to, i.e. the Ohio Farm Bureau

Dynamic Appeal: Be passionate! Share your message with confidence and show enthusiasm.

Authority: Mention you are in a position of power (Dean, President, etc.) or that you consulted with a person of power.

Hedging - qualifying a statement with conditions or exceptions

"It is generally agreed that these new technologies will transform everyday life."

VS.

"These new technologies will transform everyday life."

Less convincing, introduces doubt
More clear, appears more confident

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Example Impact Statement

Global warming is one of the largest issues of our time, having major impacts on agriculture, plant and animal diversity, and weather patterns. Greenhouse gases contribute to global warming by trapping heat in the atmosphere. Methane, which is 25 times more harmful than carbon dioxide, is one of the largest contributors to global warming. Livestock produce approximately 14.5% of the methane released into the atmosphere, half of which is created by cows alone.

In one day, a cow produces an average of 200 liters of methane. One CFAES researcher is using additives in cow feed to reduce the amounts of methane cows produce. A white powder, 3-nitrooxypropanol, is added to feed at various levels and methane production is measured. So far, the additive has been shown to cut methane production by up to 20%, depending on the amount they’re given.

Not only does this method decrease the amount of methane released, but it increases the efficiency of the feed, since 412% of cattle feed is wasted through the methane gas. This may have potential to lead the cattle to grow faster or produce more milk.

Though these methods have not yet been economically evaluated, it is expected that dietary manipulation will be an inexpensive solution for farmers to adopt. If this method is adopted on a large scale, methane produced from livestock operations could be reduced overall, in turn decreasing the contribution to total methane in the atmosphere.

Due to the fact that methane has a global warming potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide, reducing methane emissions would have a greater effect than reducing the same amount of carbon dioxide emissions. Being able to supplement cow feed with a simple additive could have significant effects at reducing global warming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs/Results</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Broader Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measured results</td>
<td>Change in Knowledge, Action or Condition</td>
<td>Societally relevant outcomes, economic impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
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"the additive has been shown to cut methane production by up to 20%"  
"This may have potential to lead the cattle to grow faster or produce more milk." (change in condition)  
"Being able to supplement cow feed with a simple additive could have significant effects at reducing global warming."

Some materials in this handout were developed from “Big Impact: Why Impactful Reporting Matters and How to Do It Better” created by Sarah Delheimer, Impact Writer for Multistate Research Fund projects. The example impact statement above is based on research performed by Chanhee Lee, Assistant Professor of Animal Sciences, CFAES.