

# CONNECTICUT MEDIA GUIDE

*Everything you need to know to have productive conversations with reporters.*





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## OVERVIEW

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Similar to sharing your story through social media, communicating with and through local media is an effective, impactful way to help create a positive image of the dairy industry and the work you do each day. These interactions help to protect demand for Connecticut dairy products and ingredients, and further "drive-home" the important role you play in your community and state.

While they can seem daunting, there are simple steps you can take to make sure your next interview, discussion, or Q&A with a local media member is a successful experience.

## TOP 5 TIPS FOR PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH MEDIA

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- 1. Ask for questions in advance.** Do research on the reporter. Follow up with your questions for the reporter. Ask for a practice interview if it is going to be live. These may not always be feasible on the part of the media outlet, but it never hurts to ask. CT Milk Promotion Board and New England Dairy can help you in asking for these preparation opportunities.
- 2. Keep it short and simple.** Use analogies to help people understand farming language. For example, total mixed ration (TMR) is like a "casserole for cows" since all the nutrients and feed components are mixed. Identify and stick to 3 key messages based on the topic of your interview.
- 3. Connect with people's values** before sharing facts. Find the common ground that resonates with the public based on the topic you're discussing. If your interview is on water quality, make sure to explain you rely on and recreate on your local waterways as well.
- 4. Get in the last word.** If you hear the reporter wrapping up, be sure to summarize again the main point you wished to convey.
- 5. Commit to following up.** Thank them and provide feedback on the story. This will help you build a relationship with the reporter, and they will call you again.

## PREPARE & PRACTICE

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- Remember you are the expert on dairy farming, you know your farm, management styles, and farming practices. Don't rely on pre-created scripts. Use CAP (Connection, Action, Perspective).
  - Take the other person's perspective – why are they asking about this topic?; Identify a point of connection and share values with resonate with the audience.
- Remember your 2-3 key messages.
- TV/Radio: ask will it be live or pre-recorded? Be sure to practice out loud.
- Print: ask when the story will be published and if you can review the story ahead of time (again, the media outlet may not allow this).
- Decide where you'll allow them to go on the farm and what they can see.
  - Try to set aside enough time to bring them specifically to areas on the farm that pertain to the story topic. If you can't stay with them, find another trusted farm employee to act as their guide. Remember – you own the farm, you control where they go and what they are allowed to take photos or video of.

## MANAGE THE FLOW

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It's a transaction, not a conversation. Deliver your messages, make your point, and stop.

- Build a bridge (Another point to consider is ...)
- Flag your message (Here's what is most important ...)
- Connect to your experience (On our farm ...)
- Interview yourself (Am I concerned about water quality?)
- Would I ever consider that approach? (Yes, if ...)
- Get in the last word. Ask the reporter to summarize what you said, and correct if needed.

## **HANDLE THE TOUGH STUFF**

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If you misspeak:

- Say something like 'Pardon me, I misspoke' ... or ... 'That's not quite what I meant, let me rephrase'

If you truly cannot or should not answer a question:

- Thank them for taking interest
- State your preference (I prefer not to...), wishes (I wish I could answer...), or obstacles (I can't because...)
- Say why you can't or won't (We don't have all the answers yet ... The research isn't complete ... I'm not the expert on that ... It's too early to tell...)
- Bridge (What I can tell you is...), or defer to an authority (The best person to ask is...)

## **END WELL**

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- Say thank you
- Ask when the story will be published or air
- Open the door to a future conversation
- Commit to following up — and do it

## **CONTACT NEW ENGLAND DAIRY AND CONNECTICUT MILK PROMOTION BOARD FOR**

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- Interest in being contacted for media interviews
- Reporter contact info and background info
- To send your story ideas to reporters
- Talking points (science & research references) for an upcoming interview
- Inviting media to an event
- Writing a letter to the editor

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

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- Surprising
- Relevant/timely
- New and/or rare
- Weird and wacky
- Your expertise
- Impact on people's lives
- Human interest
- Local impact

## WHAT DO REPORTERS NEED AND HOW DO THEY GET THE JOB DONE?

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- Subject matter experts.
- Reaction to other national or local news that could impact the dairy industry.
- 'Hot' soundbites – Whether positive or negative, typically your most emotional and engaging soundbites will make it into the news story, so again, be sure to stay calm, cool, and collected.
- Engaging Imagery and sound – whether it's a radio story, one for print, or a broadcast news piece, the writer or reporter will need images, video, and sound to help bring their story to life.
- Most reporters nowadays are working on tight deadlines. It can be challenging, but when a reporter reaches out for comment or an interview, they will most likely need to visit the farm that same day.



# WHAT ARE POSSIBLE STORY IDEAS ABOUT YOU, YOUR FAMILY, OR YOUR FARM?

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Story Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why or How:

So What? Why readers should care:

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## COMMON, TOPIC-BASED MESSAGES TO SHARE

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### Overall Messages

- Connecticut dairy farmers are committed to providing you with safe, high-quality milk and dairy products. Our commitment to quality means taking good care of our cows and land.
- According to the USDA, 97 percent of US dairy farms are family owned and operated, often by multiple generations of the family.
- Connecticut is dotted with dairy farms of all shapes and sizes, no matter the acres cropped, or cows milked, the values and commitment to quality remain the same.

### Connecticut Specific

*Reporters can be directed to New England Dairy or CT Milk Promotion Board for sources of Connecticut specific information and statistics.*

- Connecticut is home to 100 hardworking dairy farm families who strive to produce fresh, nutritious milk to feed their communities and state.<sup>1</sup>
- The dairy industry accounts for more than 32,000 direct and indirect jobs in Connecticut.<sup>2</sup>
- Connecticut's dairy industry generates an annual impact of more than \$6.4 billion for the state.<sup>2</sup>
- Local dairy farmers maintain, protect, and enhance more than 67,000 acres of open space in Connecticut.<sup>3</sup>



## COMMON, TOPIC-BASED MESSAGES TO SHARE

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### Animal Care

- Dairy farmers commitment to providing high-quality milk begins with taking good care of their cows.
- Dairy farmers care for their cows by providing a nutritious diet, good medical care, and healthy living conditions.
- Dairy farmers work closely with veterinarians and nutritionists to keep their cows healthy and comfortable. Dairy cows receive periodic checkups, vaccinations, and prompt treatment of illness.
- Dairy farmers provide clean, dry bedding for their cows and access to food and water 24 hours a day.
- Many farmers house their animals in freestall barns, which allows the cows to move about to eat, drink, or rest whenever they like. These barns let in fresh air and sunshine, and also provide shade and protection from the wind, cold, and rain.
  - Dairy farms come in all shapes and sizes. Different farms utilize different housing for their herds, but all farms provide 24-7 access to fresh food and water and a comfortable place for their cows to lay and rest.



## COMMON, TOPIC-BASED MESSAGES TO SHARE

### Environment

- Dairy farmers live on or near the land they farm. Caring for that land, air, and water is a responsibility dairy farmers share with their local communities.
- Dairy farmers are continually adopting new ways to manage cow manure to help improve air and water quality. Cropping practices like manure injection send important nutrients straight to crop roots underneath the surface of the soil; and keep them out of local waterways.
- The US dairy industry has committed to a voluntary set of goals aimed at achieving Greenhouse Gas (GHG) neutrality, optimizing water use while maximizing water recycling, and improving water quality by effectively using and engaging manure and nutrients by 2050. These goals support a vision that dairy is an environmental solution, addressing the areas where U.S. dairy collectively can have the greatest impact.<sup>4</sup>
- Dairy farms produce a gallon of milk using 95 percent less land and 65 percent less water while producing 76 percent less manure compared with 1944.<sup>5</sup>



## COMMON, TOPIC-BASED MESSAGES TO SHARE

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### Food Safety

- From farm to fridge, milk goes through strict quality controls to ensure freshness, purity, and great taste. From cow to bottle or container, milk is never touched by human hands.
- There is no scientific evidence concluding organic dairy products are safer or healthier than conventional dairy products. They both contain the same 13 essential nutrients per serving. The difference is how they are produced on the farm.<sup>6</sup>
- According to health experts, pasteurized milk offers the same health benefits as raw milk, without the risks. Pasteurization is a simple, effective method to kill potentially harmful bacteria. It does not affect the nutritional value of milk in any meaningful way.
- Pesticides are used sparingly in crop production and do not pose a health concern in US dairy products. It's important to keep in mind that modern equipment can detect residues at levels far lower than those that pose a health risk.<sup>7</sup>
- Fluid milk is not genetically modified, nor are the cows that produce the milk. If a cow consumes feed with GMO ingredients, it is digested by cows just like other feed, and their milk is just the same and does not contain any new proteins or genetic material.
- GMO foods and ingredients derived from GM-crops are safe to eat. [Hundreds of scientific studies in addition to comprehensive regulatory review](#) support the safety of foods derived from biotechnology.



## COMMON, TOPIC-BASED MESSAGES TO SHARE

### Dairy Nutrition, Holistic Health & Wellness

- Dairy farmers are committed to getting dairy and its essential nutrients to you and your family. Real milk offers a unique combination of 13 essential nutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin D, zinc, selenium, and protein that are vital to a healthy immune system.<sup>8</sup>
- Fermented dairy foods like yogurt are linked to health benefits including reduced inflammation, improved digestive health, and healthy immune systems.<sup>9</sup>
- Consuming three to four servings of milk and other dairy foods daily has a potential estimated health care cost saving of more than \$214 billion over five years.<sup>10</sup>
- Few foods deliver dairy's powerhouse of nutrients in such an affordable, appealing, and readily available way. For example, milk, at about 25 cents a glass, is a nutritional bargain.<sup>11</sup>
- The dairy case has something for everyone – including low-fat and fat-free varieties, as well as lactose-free products. Families can choose from a variety of milk, cheese, and yogurt to meet their taste and nutritional goals.



## CITATIONS

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1. CT Dairy - <https://ctdairy.org/>
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