

Five Tips for Sharing Your Farm Story on Social Media During a Crisis

It's safe to say, right now is a time of high stress for pig farmers. You want to share the things you are doing to maintain animal and public health in the face of these unprecedented circumstances. You also want to be responsive to questions your friends and followers might have about how COVID-19 is impacting the pork industry.

While sharing your stories and answering questions is a powerful way to connect us to others, it is also crucial to be very intentional about what you share online. What gets posted today could lead to the spread of misinformation tomorrow.

Overall, it's important to be transparent, authentic and compassionate in your posts and when responding to questions. Everyone is hurting and stressed right now, so a little bit of empathy goes a long way.

The following additional tips might help you best share your story online during COVID-19.

1. Show how much you care.

The current market conditions are having a profound impact on many people's farms and livelihoods, which is requiring them to make really tough decisions. However, these conditions are not changing how much you and other farmers care for your pigs. Focus on sharing your dedication to animal care, even during this time of uncertainty. Remember, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

2. Keep in mind, the general public does not have the same understanding of farm life and the pork supply chain as you do.

Most people do not understand the complexity of raising pigs and getting pork from the farm to their table. That makes it especially hard for them to understand why you must make the decisions you are making on your farm. It's okay to show your emotions, but gear the conversation to the general public. A good rule of thumb is to speak to a level a third grader would understand to ensure that things are not taken out of context, with is especially important in social media.

3. Be mindful of the photos and videos you share.

Even in times of stress and crisis, it's important to remember how powerful images and videos are in the digital space. While sharing your story, make sure to frame your photos and videos so they capture your audience's attention without a negative consequence. Make sure the pigs are healthy and clean, with barns and alleyways cleaned up. As always you want to represent the very best of your farm and industry. Although social media may seem fleeting, you're creating an online archive that tells a story about pork farming. Make sure it's a good one.

4. Content idea: Be humble and show appreciation for others.

Your employees, as well as packing plant and grocery store workers, all play a role, even if indirectly, in helping to keep farms running. Right now, just like you, they are on the frontlines. Show appreciation and thank them for their efforts and dedication to keeping our supply chain moving and together meeting consumer demand for pork.

5. Content idea: Share how pig farmers are giving back to their communities.

There is a lot of negative information everywhere right now, and many people are looking for some good news to brighten their day. There are numerous examples of producers giving back in a variety of different ways, and these stories provide a surprising and welcome break from the bleak news of the day. Like and re-share these stories and share your own to remind your followers about how much pig farmers care for their communities. Need inspiration? We are curating stories of giving back on porkcares.org.



Bonus Tip: Tactfully and Respectfully Respond to Misinformation Online.

The online environment is full of misinformation on a normal day. Add in a crisis, and the amount of misinformation grows exponentially. Our advice for responding is the same today as it always is – respond tactfully and respectfully. As hard as it is to overlook inaccuracies and inflammatory statements, you don't have to react to everything. Many times, the author is speaking to a narrow audience of like-minded followers who will not be swayed. Focus your efforts where your investment of time is worth it.

If you have questions or need advice, please feel free to reach out to Claire Masker-King (cmasker-king@pork.org).

Finally, don't forget to follow the Pork Board's social channels. You are always encouraged to like and share our content.

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@PorkCheckoff

RealPigFarming

(Producer Stories)



@RealPigFarming

Potential Responses to Questions

I've heard Smithfield is owned by a Chinese company; is our pork from China?

All meat sold in the U.S. is inspected for safety, and China is actually not eligible to ship pork products to the U.S. Visit [USDA's site](#) for more info.

Will meat still be available?

We have enough pigs to meet demand for pork, but COVID-19 is causing supply chain disruptions. Our nation's pork farmers need and want to get their pigs to market so we can continue delivering pork to consumers.

Are farmers euthanizing pigs?

Being forced to euthanize pigs in their care, even when it is best for animal welfare, is a devastating last resort for any farmer. If pigs cannot go to market, they can become overcrowded, and it is unethical to allow any animal to suffer.

Why are farmers euthanizing pigs?

COVID-19 is preventing farmers from taking their pigs to market, which can lead to overcrowding in barns. Euthanasia is a devastating last resort to protect animal welfare.

How many farmers are euthanizing pigs? How many pigs are being killed?

We have no way of quantifying that. We do know it's a last resort for farmers and they have taken every step possible to avoid it.

How will pigs be disposed of?

Farmers work with their veterinarians to ensure humane treatment and partner with state and local agencies to ensure environmentally safe disposal.

How can you waste food at a time when so many are going hungry?

Farmers raise pigs for food. But COVID-19 has robbed them of their market. They are continuing to give back though, despite these challenges. More than 14 million pounds, \$4 million dollars and PPE have been donated.