





Objectives

- Discuss WHY you should proactively invest in telling your story
- Identify those key animal husbandry/animal welfare issues that can be used as valuable lessons to promote your farm operation.
- Provide a perspective on what we can do to establish a platform where your neighbors and clients can understand the value on having your farm operation as being an integral part of the community.

Introduction

- Animal domestication is the foundation of society.
- Today there is a disconnect on **how our food is produced**:
 - How ruminants can take inedible forage to humans and convert it into **calories**
 - Cycle nutrients
 - Contribute to sequester carbon
 - Reduce brushfires
 - **Provide jobs** in areas where fruits and veggies are not profitable to be produced
 - **Many other important (and trendy) facts**


The nexus between food and trust

- Based on knowledge and wealth, we assigned leadership roles to members of our society:
 - Elders**
(Experience and sometimes wealth)
 - Healers**
(they proved to be useful by curing the sick and delivering our children)
 - Heads of households**
Hard workers, invested in our community.





Social Disconnect

- The average American has been removed from the land for 3 generations.
- In 2011 – 72% of Americans knew nothing or very little about farming.
 - 69% thought about food production often.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/nationwide-survey-reveals-disconnect-between-americans-and-their-food-130336143.html>

What farms are really about:

- 98% of American farms are family farms.
- Profit: if farms are not profitable, they go out of business.
 - Profit comes from a heavy investment in animal comfort, nutrition, protection, and investments in tools and practices that ensure a lasting business.





Social Disconnect

We often see detractors of animal agriculture referring themselves as protectors of farm animals (with little to no knowledge or desire to educate themselves with facts).

They use the term “person” to refer to farm animals.

Person definition:

1. Human, individual
2. One (such as a human being, a partnership, or a corporation) that is recognized by law as the subject of rights and duties.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary




Social Disconnect

Humane definition:

1. *Marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration for humans or animals.*
Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Humanization is the artificial attributes we often impose on livestock, inanimate objects and other entities.



Diaper wearing chicken... what's wrong with that?

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Social Disconnect

<https://www.fb.org/newsroom/fast-facts>

Amongst all this evident lack of knowledge on our food system there is a **great opportunity for utilizing facts and education as a marketing tool.**

- Possible results:
 - Engage in meaningful conversations
 - Establish yourself as a credible and honest source
 - Serve as an advocate for our industry



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The Post-Truth Era

What is the term **post-truth**?

- **Definition:** relating to or denoting circumstances in which **objective facts** are **less influential in shaping public opinion** than appeals to emotion and personal belief.



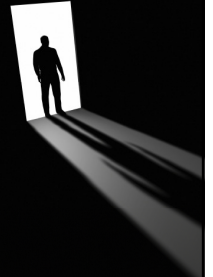
<https://features.weather.com/polluted-by-politics/>

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Introducing the FEAR factor

Definition: *an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.*

- We are all scared of what we don't know.



Introducing the FEAR factor

"Fear is what created the monster in the room, and in order to overcome the many problems and enslavements that we have today, it is not about getting rid of the monster, but about getting rid of the fear."

— [Evita Ochel](#)



What do you see?



Fainting goat or myotonic goat

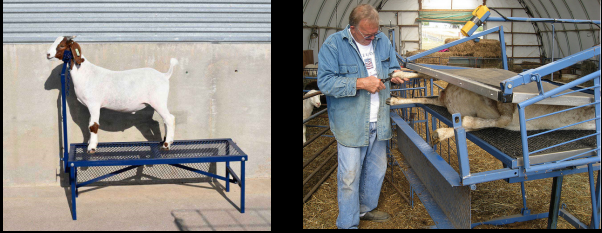
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What do you see?



Sheep shearing – humane or inhumane?

What do you see?




Goat stand (stanchion) or weapon of torture?

Tilt table – could be mistaken by a torture device.

Animal Activism

- Farmers and ranchers should be portrayed as the ultimate animal activists.
- Investing in animal well being and protection
- Promoting social behaviors of livestock
- Reducing stress
- Monitoring and treating health conditions



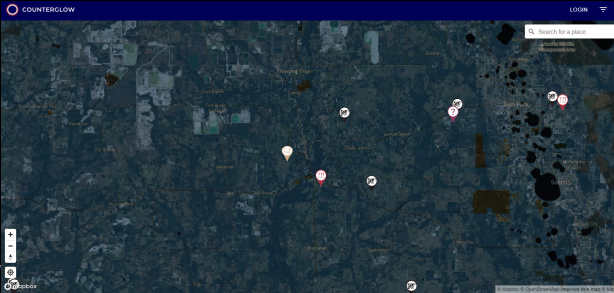
Animal Activism

- Why do anti-animal agriculture groups exist?
- Why is this important to discuss?



"If you are not at the table you are on the menu" – Michael Bradley Enzi, State Senator (R), WY


Technology can help or hinder us



Why are we talking about this?

Society

- Most people don't care about your farm unless it is impacting them.
- COVID-19 has put in evidence to most of society how disconnected they have become from their food.
 - Result:
 - A surge in vegetable gardening and backyard chicken production.
 - A resurgence in the important of food policy.
 - A realization that our food system is not perfect.



<https://animalintelligence.org/its-time-to-tell-our-story-differently/>



What can we do to protect our livelihood while telling our story?

- Invest in your **perception**
- Be **proactive** in telling your story
- Understand that **positive change** comes from **challenge**
- **Bridge that gap** in knowledge
- **Join forces** with agriculture grassroots organizations



Be proactive telling your story

"Remember that you are a teacher, you are helping people, **making them feel safer**, taking them from fear to love, from ignorance to knowledge".

Stuart Wilde, Self-Empowerment Writer

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Be proactive telling your story

Investing time in education is never a bad investment

Blogs or social media posts – provide a diary-style platform that helps others get exposed to what happens in your farmstead.

- Share pictures with context –
- Share live posts and interact with your friends.

- Others will follow your stories and pictures. Limit your audience if needed.

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Be proactive telling your story

Live video feeds – provide a window to your everyday farm operation.

- It is an evidence that the wellbeing of your animals is a **top priority** for you.

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Be proactive telling your story

Social media use:

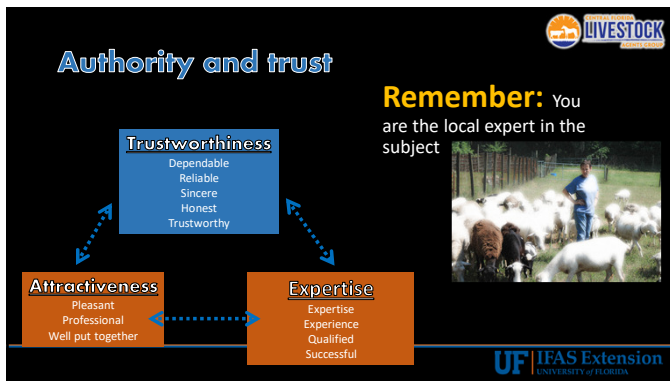
- Have a farm page if you are a business.
- Be professional.
- Limit your location information if you are not a business.

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Be proactive telling your story

- Sharing details on medical procedures, unthrifty animal footage, and other usual but misunderstood scenarios is not a good idea.
- Engage in education: don't miss a chance to educate others. For example:
 - Take a picture of animals in the pen and share why you pen these animals, or why we keep guardian dogs.
 - Use of dewormers, etc.

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Tell others why your farm operation is beneficial to the community

- Ecological services:**
 - Habitat for native wildlife
 - Groundwater recharge
- Integrity in local food production:**
 - Your farm is the backdrop for why we should invest in local food production.
 - Proper grazing, animal health and welfare should be your calling card.

Great Example: Eco-Friendly Small Ruminants

<https://animalalliance.org/small-ruminants/>

Ecological Services:

- Invasive weed management
- Carbon sequestration
- Reduced pesticide use/cost

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Have a Solid Plan

Business/marketing planning is important in many ways:

- Vision and mission –**
 - For example: Provide high quality products and services to the local community.
- Economic sense** can greatly benefit the welfare of your sheep and goat operation.
 - Unplanned growth = economic stressor → stocking rate, access to fertilizer, essential nutrients, etc.
- REASSESS - Identify the critical areas for improvement.**

Figure 4. Chapter 12 Farm Bankruptcies By Region, 680 Filings, U.S. -24%

In 2019 farm bankruptcy was 24% higher than 2018 nationwide; 31% higher in the Southeast.

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Be ready to share and open to dialogue

- We do not live in isolation.
- Be open to the benefit of another person's perspective.

"Peace is not absence of conflict; it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means". – Ronald Reagan

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If you need help let us know!

- UF/IFAS Extension and other allies can help you by providing research-based educational information for your farm.
 - Pasture/weed management
 - Animal Husbandry
 - Animal Health issues
 - Soil fertility testing
 - Water quality issues
 - Youth development opportunities
 - Pesticide testing sites
 - Many more services!

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Don't forget our Program Evaluation

<https://bit.ly/2N87tMA>

Turn on your
smartphone camera
and an internet
popup will appear
on your screen.
Please click it to fill
our survey.



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Conclusion

- Your side of the story is more important than ever. If you are not successful in telling it, others might make one up and damage your reputation (intentionally or unintentionally).
 - Be **intentional** in telling your story.
 - Be **factual**
 - Be **neutral**, but grounded in your principles and science
 - Be **prepared**
 - Be **courteous**



Investing in Animal Welfare: Telling our story

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