Media or reporter desk-side visits

As newsrooms across the country change the way they gather information and deal with tighter budgets, it’s often difficult for reporters to get away from their desks to cover events and news stories. This is where initiative and accommodation on your part comes in.

Consider arranging what is called a “desk-side” visit with a reporter in the newsroom.

Desk-sides typically last about 30 minutes, during which you provide newsworthy information about agriculture, local impact and current food-related issues with a reporter and answer their questions. It’s good to come prepared with a handout or two of statistics and information (such as a Food & Farm Facts book) that the reporter can use as a resource. Desk-sides are easy to arrange and reporters will appreciate your consideration.

Below is a sample email requesting a desk-side meeting:

Dear Mr./Ms.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

I am contacting you regarding one of our area’s most important economic contributors – agriculture. I would like to ask for a few a minutes next week to discuss upcoming events that will be taking place in our community as part of the Fall Agri-Fest and the “Our Food Link” program. I understand your schedule is tight, so I would like to visit with you at your office at your convenience. Please let me know a time that works best for you.

***or***

I am contacting you regarding the new food safety regulations that are being proposed. Although this is happening in Washington, the effect of such regulations would be very real for farmers like myself and others in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_county. I would like to visit with you for a few a minutes in the next week to discuss how these regulations could be economically harmful to our community. I understand your schedule is tight, so I would be more than happy to visit with you at your office. Please let me know a time that works best for you.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

[Name, title and contact information]

When the media calls: A quick reference guide

* Determine and know your interview goal in advance.
* Practice what you plan to say and how to say it.
* Focus on and repeat your key messages.
* Think and speak in terms of headlines.
* Keep your answers brief.
* Say what you want to say, then stop.
* Avoid industry jargon and acronyms.
* Remember who your audience is.
* Never go off the record.
* If you don’t know, say so, find the right resource and provide a follow-up answer.
* Be respectful of reporters and meet their deadlines.