
Farm Name

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Month/Day/Year

HFHA

HealthyFarms
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INTRODUCTION

A farm-level crisis communication plan is a working document designed to help producers prepare for and respond to situations that impact the ability to operate the farm.

While crisis-causing situations will vary, producers must have the capability to respond effectively. This plan will encourage producers to prepare for crises and understand the steps to be taken in response.

This plan has been designed as a framework that producers can use to gather information that will be needed in the event of a crisis, an assessment of vulnerabilities and outline of roles and responsibilities necessary to carry out an effective crisis response. Not all crisis situations can be outlined in a plan such as this. Rather, the intent is to provide a tool for preparing producers to respond to any situation which may arise in the course of business.

WHAT IS A CRISIS?

A crisis is any incident or event that interrupts the normal flow of business or threatens your ability to operate and has the potential to damage the brands of the customers to whom you sell your livestock. Not all situations are crises and not all crises are equal.

When a crisis occurs on your farm, it is essential that you:

- Demonstrate your willingness to cooperate with officials and stakeholders.
- Provide timely, accurate and credible information regarding the situation, and communicate effectively to all stakeholders.
- Prepare employees beforehand by training them how to respond during an animal health emergency.
- Act quickly and appropriately to respond to requests for information from the media.
- Protect the name and reputation of your farm, and the brands of your customers.
- Maintain employee, producer and customer confidence.

CRISIS TRIGGERS

POTENTIAL CRISIS SITUATIONS

The situations that result in crises may vary, but they will most likely fall within a few distinct areas of concern including:

1. **Animal health or welfare issues:** A disease outbreak or activism/agroterrorism activities.
2. **Air or water quality concerns:** Potential for regulation of air emissions or water quality issues due to manure application or spills.
3. **Natural disasters:** Potential environmental impact of tornado, hurricane, floods, etc.
4. **Emerging foreign animal diseases (FADs):** Potential of foreign animal disease to disrupt production and consumer demand.
5. **Human health:** Human health issues among employees or neighbors that could result in exposure to risk for the farm.
6. **Community relations:** Pressure from communities with regard to odor, animal well-being or regulatory issues.

PRE-CRISIS PLANNING

Much of the work that is needed for effective response must take place before a crisis situation occurs.

Spokesperson identification and training: Determine the appropriate spokesperson(s) for your farm and provide spokesperson training to these individuals. Include a back-up spokesperson in the event that the primary person is unavailable. Because the designated spokesperson will have specific training, others on the farm will be less likely to volunteer information or take on the role without proper preparation.

Key messages and statements: Based on the vulnerabilities identified, develop a basic statement and key messages that can be filled in with specifics when an incident occurs. Include these documents in the appendices of the crisis plan and review each quarter for potential updates.

Frontline response messages: Develop scripted responses for those responsible for answering phone calls or email messages during the crisis period.

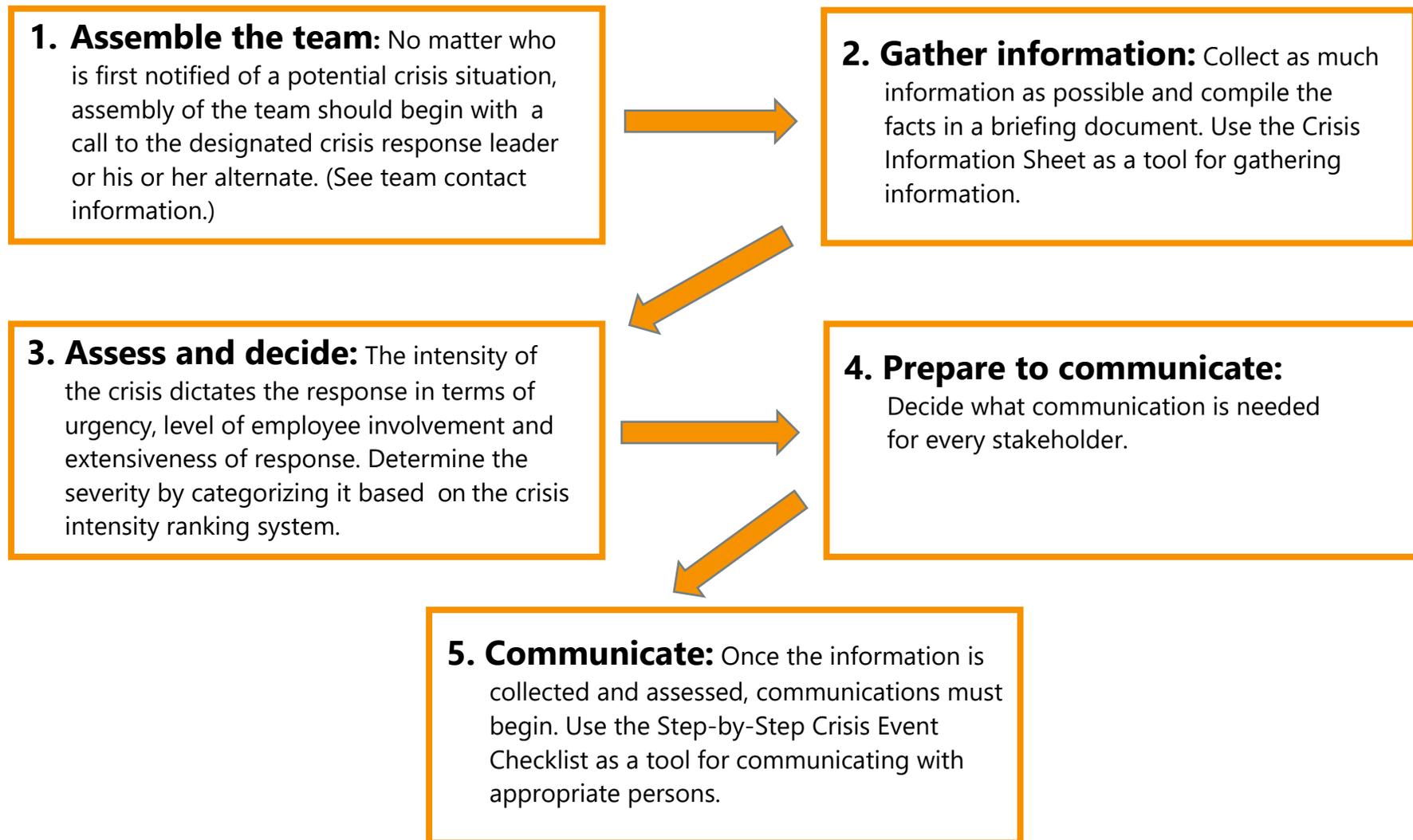
Website: Develop a plan for updating the company website with timely, appropriate information for the media and key audiences.

Training: In preparation for a potential crisis, schedule training for all members of the core crisis team and work.

Enlist Assistance: Identify the persons who should be notified in the event of a crisis and notify them that you are developing a crisis communications plan. Ask who they should communicate with during a crisis and get contact information to include in your plan documents.

Social media policy: Create a social media and digital communications policy for employees to refrain from exposing the farm to additional risk by engaging in social media or providing inappropriate information via email.

FIVE STEPS TO CRISIS RESPONSE



1. ASSEMBLE THE TEAM

The Core Team Roster lists those from your farm business and outside organizations you need to contact immediately should a crisis arise. This list should be completed as part of your biosecurity plan preparation and reviewed quarterly for personnel updates.

Name	Contact Info	Alternate Person	Contact Info	Responsibility
	O: C: H:		O: C: H:	

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Crisis Response Coordinator

The crisis response coordinator is responsible for activating the crisis response plan, managing the overall crisis communications effort and directing the post event analysis and review.

The crisis response coordinator must be familiar with all aspects of the crisis communications plan and overall crisis response procedures. The coordinator must have both the judgment and experience necessary to manage the crisis, as well as the authority to obtain additional resources and support as needed. Assign a primary coordinator and at least one back-up.

Name	Contact Information

Leadership

In a crisis situation, leadership is needed to help determine overall strategy, generate buy-in and support from leading stakeholders and, if necessary, address the media. Leadership may also be called upon to inform employees and/or members of difficult situations. Assign a back-up.

Name	Contact Information

Media Relations

The media relations specialist is responsible for the drafting, approval and distribution of statements, news releases and other material related to the situation, based upon the key messages developed by the core team. The media relations liaison manages interview requests and inquiries. At times, this individual may serve as a spokesperson but, more often, will set up interviews with the appropriate spokesperson.

The media relations coordinator should also designate an employee or work with a third party to handle media monitoring. This individual is responsible for monitoring the media in real time, arranging for the collection and archiving of media coverage, alerting the crisis communications response team to unusual coverage, and organizing and disseminating a summary of coverage to the core team.

Name	Contact Information

Employee/Internal Communications

The employee communications coordinator is responsible for alerting employees of urgent information they need to continue business functions in a crisis situation. The coordinator will use existing communication channels as well as any dedicated channels developed for crisis communications. The goal of employee communications is to reduce the risk of negative reactions and discourage employee interaction with persons outside the organization with regard to the crisis situation, especially with regard to social media and email communications.

Name	Contact Information

Veterinary Services

The Veterinary Services coordinator should be the lead veterinarian on staff or veterinary consultant employed by the farm. This role assists in assessing any animal well-being issues and advising management on animal health issues connected to the situation. May serve as a topic expert.

Name	Contact Information

Customer/Stakeholder Communications

The customer communications coordinator is responsible for notifying packer/processor and other processing stakeholders of a crisis and for providing updates as the crisis team works through the situation.

Name	Contact Information

Legal Counsel

Legal counsel should be informed of the situation by the farm owner or a senior member of management. Depending on crisis level, may participate in crisis team meetings or be consulted on specifics about the crisis response and recovery.

Name	Contact Information

Administration/Logistics

Depending upon the nature of the situation, there may be a need for meeting space, news conference space or other arrangements. The administration and logistics coordinator is responsible for securing meeting space, scheduling travel and keeping the core team supplied with the tools and support needed for effective crisis management.

Name	Contact Information

Name	Contact Information

Name	Contact Information

2. GATHER INFORMATION

Situation Analysis

Below are some questions you should be prepared to answer or can expect from emergency management professionals if they are involved.

What do you know for sure?

- What do you know about the situation?
- What are the details about your farm?
- What is the ownership of the farm?
- Do you have someone on staff to help with managing communications? Have they been contacted?

What do you believe to be the situation?

- Do you know if the disease outbreak is reportable or a foreign animal disease?
- Do you suspect agroterrorism activities?
- Have there been any suspicious situations over the past six months?

Who is aware of the situation?

- Has your ownership and staff been notified of the situation and reminded that the information should be kept confidential?
- Is law enforcement involved?
- Have you been contacted by any news media? If yes, how have you responded?
- What is your relationship with local news media?
- Does your business have a website or social media accounts that should be monitored?

3. ASSESS AND DECIDE

CRISIS INTENSITY

The intensity of the crisis dictates the response in terms of urgency, level of employee and outside involvement, and extensiveness of response. To help your farm's team categorize crisis intensity and respond appropriately, use the following severity ranking system:

Red Level: Serious threat to human health or the ability of the farm to continue to operate.

Orange Level: Potential threat to human or animal health.
Threatens long-term customer relationships and/or current production practices.

Yellow Level: Minimal threat to human or animal health.
Threatens short-term customer relationships and/or current production practices.

Green Level: No threat to human or animal health with minimal risk of long-term influence on the ability to operate.

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN DETERMINING CRISIS SEVERITY:

1. Have many animals died, or has there been a human death, serious illness or injury?
2. Does the situation require immediate notification of other stakeholders?
3. Does the situation require notification of external authorities or agencies?
4. Does the situation require immediate administrative or operations action, such as quarantine?
5. Is there a serious threat to human health?
6. Is animal well-being involved?
7. Is there a serious and immediate threat to your production practices?
8. Have there been inquiries from the media?
9. Is the situation potentially serious enough to overwhelm your ability to respond? Are additional resources necessary?

4. PREPARE TO COMMUNICATE

Decisions must be made about whether to communicate and, if so, what to say to important audiences, how to reach them and when to inform them. Each crisis team member should maintain an easily accessed up-to-date contact list of the key people within their area of responsibility.

Ideas for Contact Lists:

- Employees
- Key customers
- Local, regional and trade media
- Media relations
- Animal health experts
- Industry resources
- Law enforcement
- Community stakeholders
- Adjacent neighbors

5. COMMUNICATE

Timely response is critical in a crisis situation. To help guide the crisis response, each step is framed in a general timeline. While this timeframe may not always be met, this format organizes the response priorities. Social media and electronic communications intensify the need for speedy response to the situation. However, statements and key messages should be carefully prepared and approved by the core team leaders to ensure the communication will not cause additional complications.

The response steps outlined below are also referenced in the crisis response divided by audience. This allows all members of the core crisis and implementation teams to view how activities work together while also focusing specifically on the audience they are serving.

WITHIN THE 1st HOUR

IMMEDIATE STEPS – WITHIN THE FIRST HOUR

Leadership

- Assemble with the core crisis team to assess the situation.
- Confirm strategy.
- Identify stakeholders.

Media Relations/Customer Communications

- Locate and review updated media list.
- Confirm strategy to communicate with stakeholders and others.

Media Monitor Lead

- Activate mechanism for monitoring and ensure all relevant coverage is captured.

WITHIN THE 1st HOUR

INFORMATION GATHERING CHECKLIST

This checklist will assist you in taking the necessary immediate steps to initiate crisis response.

- Ensure safety of people and animals.
- Contact your veterinarian.
- Contact law enforcement agencies if needed.
- Initiate internal call tree.
- Contact people you do business with.
- Prepare for media – depending on the crisis, you should expect calls from the media. Take the call, record the name of the media outlet, the reporter’s name, call-back number and email address. When a statement has been prepared, return the media call to answer their questions.
- Plan for unannounced media – prepare staff to question anyone trying to gain admittance to the premises, identify and intercept the media. Let them know you will comment when the situation has been assessed.
- Prepare family and staff for what to expect - explain the situation, let them know they may get questions for a few days and provide key messages they can use to respond. Make them aware that the situation may be difficult for a while but you will get through it.

WITHIN THE 1st HOUR

FARM-SPECIFIC DETAILS

Use this page to enter quick-reference details about your premises for public interviews and discussions about the farm operation.

WITHIN THE FIRST 3 HOURS

WITHIN THE FIRST THREE HOURS

Overall Response

- Develop official talking points to serve as a basis for all communications with stakeholders and the public if needed.
- Determine the potential need for a second spokesperson.
- If crisis is level red or orange, or if the situation has potential legal ramifications, submit talking points for review by legal counsel.

Media

- Prepare spokesperson and refresh media response training with spokesperson.
- Prepare media materials for key audiences, ranked by priority given the severity and details of the situation.
- Secure leadership approvals on media materials and determine the most appropriate timing for distribution.
- Coordinate with media monitoring team and refine messages based on coverage.
- Anticipate questions that may arise and research, write and approve answers.

Stakeholder Communications

- Prepare to communicate with stakeholders.
- Work with crisis coordinator to develop official talking points.
- Work with the crisis response coordinator and leadership to develop and document a plan and timeline for how the situation will be addressed and resolved.
- Communicate your official talking points and response plan to stakeholders and others.

WITHIN THE FIRST 3 HOURS

If the Farm Manages a Website and Social Media

- Monitor social media for activity.
- Post approved statement on website.
- Distribute key messages via social media.
- Determine need for paid search, develop keywords and execute if needed.

Internal Communications

- Distribute employee update with instructions on how to route any questions from the public, vendors, customers and the media to the official spokesperson.
- Provide employees with official news release and status updates as soon as available.
- Provide news release via email and/or fax to officers or board of directors.
- Follow up with personal phone calls by leadership.

Media Monitor Lead

- Keep crisis team aware of coverage, frequency and key points.
- Activate media folder for stories from internal sources.

Information Technology

- Provide support, as needed, regarding use of web resources and computer applications.

Administration/Logistics

- Receive update from crisis team on intended overall crisis strategy.
- Help locate needed team members.
- Coordinate/engage back-up staffing, logistics as needed.

WITHIN THE FIRST 24 HOURS

Crisis Coordinator

- Solidify a reporting and planning mechanism as the crisis moves forward.
- Establish regular times for the core crisis team to convene for strategy discussions, followed by tactical action-oriented meetings with all individuals with specific crisis responsibilities.
- Continue reviewing and approving official statements, messages and communications.
- Analyze/anticipate the next wave of crisis triggers.
- Track all contacts through key audience contact logs.

Leadership

- Update leaders/key stakeholders.
- Arrange conference call with production managers and farm workers.
- Continue working with government officials and law enforcement if they are involved.

Media

- If news conference is warranted, set time and make arrangements to share information and answer questions.
- Track all media calls with the media contact log.

Stakeholder Communications

- Discuss and determine the potential need for outreach and follow-up with key stakeholders.
- Track all contacts through contact logs.

WITHIN THE FIRST 24 HOURS

Social Media

- Determine need for updates to social media platforms.
- Work with the media monitoring coordinator to set up a system to report social media activity.
- Initiate pre-determined social media strategy, including the following elements:
 - Identification of potential “friends” and “foes” online.
 - Initiating conversation with pre-established online relationships.
 - Leveraging current social media use, such as Twitter, to share messages and information.
 - Response to misinformation and supporting comments in the social media landscape.

Internal Communications

- Provide the situation report to employees.
- If feasible, provide a brief verbal update to employees not directly involved in the crisis planning.
- Inform of opportunity to “listen-only” to daily implementation call.

Media Monitor Lead

- Issue “Day One Report” outlining coverage to crisis team.

WITHIN THE FIRST 48 HOURS

General Response

- Meet regularly to assess management communications and provide ongoing reports that include comments and questions received from the media and stakeholders.

Media

- Review all media coverage to determine how the company's information is coming across; update messages accordingly
- Call individual reporters to correct any misinformation and offer to email them the correct information.
- Always document media interactions.
- If needed, issue a news release or statement of progress and new developments.
- Anticipate reporter interests and questions at this stage.

Stakeholders

- Email important stakeholders to keep them up-to-date.

Social Media

- Review social media coverage to determine how the farm's information is coming across.
- Identify potential new triggers or areas of interest based on social media chatter.
- Post updates when there is new information available for the general public.
- Anticipate new questions.
- Continue communication across all social media channels.
- Are there any key influencers who are talking about the issue and start conversing with them.

Media Monitoring

- Analyze media coverage and identify any trends.

WITHIN THE WEEK THAT FOLLOWS

Leadership

- Determine the strategy to begin returning the farm to normal.

Media

- Review all media coverage every day. Evaluate the content for any misinformation that should be corrected.
- Compile a report of all media coverage so far and share with the team.
- Follow up with reporters when there are new developments.
- If needed, issue a news release or statement of progress and new developments.

Stakeholders

- Maintain frequent communication with key stakeholders and provide progress updates.

Social Media

- Review social media coverage and evaluate content, responding as needed.
- Continue communications as new information becomes available.
- Continue conversations with key influencers who are talking about the issue.

Media Monitoring

- Analyze coverage to determine areas of improvement for future issues.
- Issue daily reports as needed for the team.

FOLLOW UP

DEBRIEF AND CRITIQUE

After the crisis has subsided, the team should meet soon afterward to analyze how the crisis was handled and determine what steps are needed to complete all follow-up activities. The critique should include an assessment of media coverage.

The team should meet to compile its assessment, using these questions as a guide:

- What lessons were learned from this situation?
- How could communications be handled better?
- Do emergency procedures need to be modified?
- What actions or resources are needed to respond more quickly or more effectively?
- What steps can be taken to prevent a similar crisis in the future?
- What feedback did we get from our key audiences?
- Do we understand how these audiences' views of the farm may have changed during the course of this situation?
- If those changed attitudes are for the worse, what steps can we take to repair our reputation?

Also review and critique media coverage of the crisis.

THANK THOSE WHO PROVIDED ASSISTANCE

These may include employees, service providers, veterinarians, law enforcement, government officials, neighbors, consultants and trade associations. In the event of a catastrophic crisis, these may include emergency responders, utilities, hospital administrators, the media and social service agencies, as appropriate.

STAY PREPARED

- Keep contact lists updated on a quarterly basis.
- Continue training staff for response to animal health and other farm emergencies.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FRONTLINE COMMUNICATORS

Frontline communicators are those persons who will be taking company phone calls and emails through the crisis. When answering calls during a crisis situation, ensure you have the most recent talking points and external information to share with callers. As calls are received, please follow these steps to ensure that we fully understand who is calling, the nature of their questions and what needs to be done.

- **Respond** politely to callers using supplied talking points. Inform them that phone conversations are being recorded for documentation purposes.
- **Respond** to emails in a timely manner using approved response language.
- **Log** phone conversations and email traffic on crisis contact report.
- **Forward** interview requests from media and other communications needing urgent response to crisis team leader.
- **Report** any threats against persons or property to the crisis team leader/alternate.

SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT/AUTOMATED RESPONSE MESSAGE

Thank you for calling.

If you are calling for more information about [Description of Situation]

we are gathering details and working with the appropriate officials to assess the situation.

For regularly updated information, please visit [www.YourFarmSite.com]

or wait on the line to leave a recorded message. We will respond as soon as possible.

If you are calling on another matter, please stay on the line for operator assistance.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH LOG

Date: _____

Team Member Name: _____

Stakeholder Name: _____

Organization: _____

Office Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Contact Comments:

Issues/Details for Follow-up:

STAKEHOLDER CALL BACK LOG

Date of Call: _____

Time of Call: _____

Contact Name: _____

Organization: _____

Team Member Name: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Contact Email: _____

Response to Contact: Email Telephone Text In-person

Resolution: Reached No Answer Left Message Busy

Follow-up:

MEDIA CONTACT LOG

Date: _____

Time: _____

Team Member: _____

Print/Television/Online

News Source: _____

Reporter Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Request: _____

Reporter Deadline: _____

CALL-BACK LOG

Date: _____ Time: _____

Team Member: _____

Actions: _____
