

Media Interview Tips

As AAEA implements the “Communicating Out Strategy”, members are starting to get requests from the media to do interviews on their research. Media interviews are much different than a job interview, so here are some tips and suggestions for conducting interviews to best get your message out to through traditional media.

Note: If you are dealing with interviews through AAEA, Communications Manager Jay Saunders (jasaunders@aaea.org) will likely be setting them up. If you have any specific questions, or would like to do pre-interview consulting/a mock interview, please feel free to contact Jay at any time.

The first rule of thumb is don't be nervous. Chances are the journalists who contact us are looking for general information and are not doing an investigative or “gotcha” story. Our strategy at AAEA is to send news releases to journalists with a specific interest in the topics you've written about.

Before the interview:

- Prepare/think about your key message and what points you'd like to make
- Feel free to jot down a couple notes on your talking points
- Be in a quiet location, especially if you are doing a radio interview
- Know who your interviewer is (Ag-based, a general reporter, etc.). Again, this is something AAEA staff can assist with

During the Interview:

- Treat the interview like a conversation. Being comfortable helps both you and the reporter. Remember you are talking on the record, so don't be loose and joking, but some of the best interviews I've seen are when the two people involved are comfortable with each other.
- Don't go off the record. There is no such thing.
- Try not to use jargon, but don't feel the need to “dumb down” your research. If a reporter doesn't understand they will ask a follow up question.
- The beginning of the interview will likely be “background” questions: what is the point of your research, what did you find, why is it important, etc. Journalists need the “Five Ws” (who, what, when, where, why)
- Answer the question and stop talking... no need to ramble
- Don't be afraid of pauses when you are done answering questions. Either the reporter is writing/typing your response or they are hoping you will fill that void with information they didn't ask about. (again, that is used more in investigative stories, but it is one of the oldest tricks in the book and is taught in journalism 101)
- You don't have to answer every question. If it doesn't fit with your research or your expertise, say exactly that.

- Feel free to take your time answering questions. You shouldn't feel rushed – they are the ones asking for your time.
- Don't suggest what reporters should include in their stories. They hate that. You can get around it by saying things like "I think this is particularly important" or "a key part of our research is", etc.

This is, by no means, a complete list of dos and don'ts, but a guide to help you better prepare for talking with the media. Again, if you have any questions, please contact Jay Saunders or Executive Director [Brian Mondragon Jones](#) at any time.