

MEDIA TIPS

This document can help strengthen your media-relation efforts and give you some tips on how to create a more newsworthy story.

The sections include:

- [Understanding How the Media Works](#)
- [The Pitch](#)
- [The Interview](#)

For additional information, we encourage you to take the webinar series, [Tips on Working with the Media](#). It will teach you how to get stories about your organization in your local news, radio, and print media. The 3 sessions of the series include:

- Part 1 covers local television news and morning shows.
- Part 2 covers local newspapers and print publications.
- Part 3 covers local radio stations.

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE MEDIA WORKS

What makes for a good news story?

Look for something that is:

- Timely
- Local
- Prominent
- Unusual
- Significant
- Controversial

What elements create a newsworthy story?

- A local news angle
- A connection with national news
- Something related to a current trend
- Celebrities (sports, politicians, etc.)
- Seasonal angles (Holidays, warm weather, cold weather, disaster preparedness for pets, etc.)

- Humor, heartbreak, or extraordinary circumstances
- Human interest stories

Pitching Print

Send press releases and media alerts to City Desk, Features Editors, Beat Reporters or Pet Columnists/Bloggers.

Print reporters require longer lead times for stories; newspapers may be a few days; columnists may be a few weeks; and magazines may be as much as six months.

Print reporters like stories with more in-depth information and want to cite multiple sources; be ready to suggest other interview sources, like area animal shelters who can talk about pet intake or one of your clients who can share why they got their pet sterilized.

Some stories don't make it to print anymore, but do make it online.

Photos can enhance your story proposal; if you send them in your releases, make sure the file size is small and quick to open.

Read the publication before you pitch so you know their audience.

Pitching Television

Send press releases and media alerts to assignment editors.

Send longer range story ideas to producers of specific morning shows or news shows.

Think visually; think about the ways you can make it fun for television.

Not all stories make it on TV; some will go straight to their website, so photos are still great to send.

Watch the news; read their website to get some ideas on the stories they like to cover; maybe your story would be great for the end of the newscast send off.

It is okay to send press releases directly to a reporter if you know the reporter likes to cover animal stories.

Pitching Radio

Send press releases and media alerts to news directors and radio personalities

Keep it very short; most local news stories are less than 10 seconds long

Ask them to interview you near the kennel (in the kennel may be too loud) to provide some natural background noise of dogs

Local radio likes to mention free events to the community

Send a photo because they are posting news stories on websites too

It is okay to send information directly to a radio personality if you know that he or she likes to over animals

Provide quick tips that radio personalities can share with listeners

Ask about being a guest on their public affairs show

THE PITCH

The Press Release

- Include the five Ws: "Who," "What," "Where," "When," and "Why"
- Ensure your news is truly newsworthy

- Start with most important information first, then work down to least important
- Include facts on the issue, announcement or event
- Include quotes from appropriate people
- Include media contact information at the top
- Attach a related photo

The Pitch Letter

- Often delivered via e-mail format
- Give details on a potential story you are suggesting to a reporter
- Include all relevant information, packaged in a concise and compelling format, which may include photos

The Press Conference or Media Event

- Use only for important announcements that have a major impact on the local community or general public

The Media Alert

- Use for an event, press conference or announcement
- Distribute two days in advance
- Include the who, what, when, where and why
- Include a brief overview of what to expect
- Include media contact information

THE INTERVIEW

Be Ready

- Media train two to three staff. Review media tips in this kit on how to talk to the media. Make sure they understand every aspect of your agency, from your clinic location and phone number to clinic services, pricing, policies and procedures.
- Have a press release in hand to give to the reporter/videographer.
- If they are at your clinic offer the videographer a tour and provide some ideas for set-up.
- Be available as soon as the reporter arrives, even if it's unexpected.

- Select a pet for the interview and make sure the animal is awake after surgery as you don't want groggy pets. Make sure you have a signed photo release from the owner.
- Make sure the vet is in cap, mask, and gown if pictures are taken during surgery.

Focus on 2-3 Key Messages

- Prioritize your messages
- Know your messages and have them ready in short sound bites
- Know what you want your audience to feel or do

Always

- Be prepared; know your story and your organizations facts and stats
- Tell the truth
- Be brief in your responses, especially for television
- Speak in a friendly conversational tone

Be Careful

- Don't show animals in surgery. You don't want the animals to appear dead or show blood as that can turn the public off and lose potential clients.
- Don't show groggy animals. Make sure pets are wide awake before being photographed.

Your “Bill of Rights”

You have the right to:

- Know the topic in advance.
- Know the identity and affiliation of the reporter.
- State your key points.
- Bring up relevant topics not specifically asked for.
- Know how the material will be used and who else is being interviewed.
- Request a correction for misinformation.