

AGEDS 327

Crisis Communication Unit

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DAIRY OAKS FARMS

Dairy Oaks Farms

- **Size of operation:** One of the largest dairy farms in the United States, known for its commitment to sustainable and transparent farming practices.
- **Location:** Headquarters and Main farm in Fair Oaks, Indiana with multiple farms across the Midwest.
- **Number of employees:** 500 plus employees involved in various aspects of dairy production and operations.
- **Goods and services:** Dairy Oaks Farms specializes in dairy production, including milk, cheese, and other dairy products. They also offer educational tours and experiences to promote agricultural awareness and sustainability, especially within the dairy industry

Crisis Scenario 1

Dairy Oaks Farms faces a crisis when animal rights organization PETA releases edited footage allegedly depicting instances of animal cruelty at one of its dairy farms. The farm offers tours and while a group was on the tour an individual filmed the operation and edited the film to look as if it was animal cruelty. The footage, widely circulated on social media and news outlets, sparks public outrage and prompts calls for boycotts against the company.

Effects

- **Employees:** Employees may face backlash and scrutiny, impacting morale and job satisfaction, despite being unaware of any wrongdoing.
- **Business:** Dairy Oaks Farms experiences a significant decline in sales and reputation damage as consumers react to the allegations of animal cruelty.
- **Industry:** The incident draws attention to animal welfare issues within the dairy industry and ag industry as a whole, leading to increased scrutiny and calls for stricter regulations.
- **Animal Welfare:** Despite the edited nature of the footage, concerns arise about the treatment of animals on dairy farms, prompting discussions about ethical farming practices.
- **Community:** Local communities express shock and disappointment over the allegations, affecting the farm's relationship with neighbors and stakeholders.
- **Legal Actions:** Dairy Oaks Farms may face legal challenges, including potential lawsuits and regulatory investigations. They also may sue the filmer for defamation because of the evidence and edited nature of the footage.

Beginning of the Crisis:

- Audience: Consumers, stakeholders, regulatory agencies, internal employees
- Message: Immediate response to the allegations, denial of any wrongdoing, and commitment to investigating the source and authenticity of the footage.

- Delivery Platform: Press release distributed to media outlets and stakeholders, internal company-wide communication to inform employees about the situation and reassure them of the company's integrity.

During the Crisis:

- Audience: Same as above, with a focus on providing regular updates and addressing stakeholder concerns.
- Message: Continuous communication about the progress of the investigation, sharing of evidence debunking the edited footage, and efforts to counter misinformation.
- Delivery Platform: Updates via company website and social media channels, direct communication with stakeholders through press conferences and industry events, engagement with consumers through targeted messaging and responses to inquiries.

After the Crisis:

- Audience: Consumers, stakeholders, regulatory agencies, local community
- Message: Reflection on the impact of the crisis, lessons learned, and reaffirmation of Fair Oaks Farms' commitment to animal welfare and transparency.
- Delivery Platform: Public statement acknowledging the challenges faced, implementation of enhanced animal welfare protocols and monitoring systems, engagement in community outreach programs to rebuild trust, ongoing communication through educational initiatives and updates on sustainability efforts.

Crisis Scenario 2

Food Safety Concerns Due to Contamination. Dairy Oaks Farms faces a crisis when routine testing reveals the presence of harmful bacteria, such as E. coli or Salmonella, in a batch of its dairy products. The contamination is traced back to a specific processing facility, raising concerns about food safety and prompting a product recall.

Effects:

- **Consumers:** Consumers express fear and outrage over the potential health risks associated with consuming contaminated dairy products, leading to widespread public concern and loss of trust in the brand.
- **Business/employees:** Dairy Oaks Farms suffers significant financial losses due to the product recall, decreased sales, and damage to its reputation. The incident tarnishes the company's image as a provider of safe and high-quality dairy products.
- **Industry:** The contamination incident draws attention to food safety issues within the dairy industry, leading to increased regulatory scrutiny and potential changes in safety standards and regulations.
- **Health:** Individuals who consume the contaminated products may experience adverse health effects, ranging from mild gastrointestinal discomfort to more serious illness, depending on the severity of the contamination.
- **Legal:** Dairy Oaks Farms faces potential legal liabilities, including lawsuits from affected consumers and regulatory penalties for violations of food safety regulations.
- **Community:** Local communities express concern and disappointment over the contamination incident, impacting the farm's relationships with neighbors and stakeholders.

- Beginning of the Crisis:
 - Audience: Consumers, regulatory agencies, internal employees
 - Message: Immediate acknowledgment of the contamination incident, assurance of consumer safety as the top priority, and commitment to taking swift action to address the issue.
 - Delivery Platform: Press release distributed to media outlets and stakeholders, internal company-wide communication to inform employees about the situation and outline response protocols.
- During the Crisis:
 - Audience: Same as above, with a focus on providing regular updates and addressing stakeholder concerns.
 - Message: Ongoing communication about the extent of the contamination, steps taken to contain the problem, and efforts to ensure the safety of remaining products.
 - Delivery Platform: Updates via company website and social media channels, direct communication with regulators and industry partners through press conferences and industry forums, customer outreach through hotline support and email notifications.
- After the Crisis:
 - Audience: Consumers, stakeholders, regulatory agencies, local community
 - Message: Reflection on the root causes of the contamination incident, implementation of enhanced food safety measures and quality control protocols, and commitment to rebuilding trust and confidence in Fair Oaks Farms' products.
 - Delivery Platform: Public statement outlining corrective actions taken, participation in industry initiatives to improve food safety standards, community engagement efforts to demonstrate transparency and accountability, ongoing communication through educational campaigns and updates on food safety practices.

Communication Touchpoints

- Discuss how you would communicate information in 3 places within the crisis - beginning, during, and after. Describe the message, medium, and audience for each.

	Who is our audience?	What is our message?	Which delivery platform do we use?
Beginning of crisis	Listed above	Listed above	Listed above
During crisis	Listed above	Listed above	Listed above
After crisis	Listed above	Listed Above	Listed above