

News Column #4 *Advocating for Agriculture*

In a world where questions are answered by running a quick google search and taking the first answer that pops up as gospel, there is a society seeking their knowledge about agriculture from the internet. The first thing to come up? Most likely a PETA article on how Ag is ruining the earth. Google's answers can't be changed, but what can be changed is how we as Agriculturalists use our voices.

Because technology is so prominent these days, we can't stop people from googling their questions, but we can tell our stories. We each have a unique story that can be used as such a viable tool for changing the outlook on Agriculture in the eyes of the consuming public. It can be a really scary thing to put yourself out there and open up about personal life experiences because it can make a person vulnerable to public criticism, but the times I've learned the most from someone are the times they have shared that kind of information with me.

Each one of us has a loud voice for Agriculture that can be projected many ways. Some of those might include:

- Utilizing Social media platforms as a teaching method, a place to share experiences, and spread facts.
- Participate in local, county, and state level directing boards and leadership positions.
- Getting involved with organizations like Farm Bureau and Utah Cattlemen's/Cattlemen's.
- Inviting the public to visit your operation.
- Educating yourself on current controversial topics in Ag.
- Becoming educated in your field in Agriculture so you can answer questions with factual evidence, personal experience, and do so in a kind and non judgemental manner.
- Keep up with legislation and laws involving agriculture and vote accordingly.

Some Do's and Don'ts for AGvocating to the public:

Do:

- Speak kindly, make your point relatable to something consumers might have a knowledge of. For example; Wild horses may be compared to a fish bowl with one fish in it. You feed the fish a pinch of food everyday and the amount of water (space) never changes. You then add 400 fish to that same fish bowl with the same amount of food each day and the same amount of water. What happens?
- Invite consumers to seek answers from producers, not the internet. Wouldn't you want to ask a doctor about your symptoms instead of googling possible diseases you may have? Ask someone that knows.
- Make it personal, don't try to speak for the entire Agriculture community as a whole. Speak for yourself, for your operations, from your experience.
- Try to look at their question or concern through their eyes. Both parties may have their perspectives changed.

Don't:

- Speak in terms they might not understand
- Guess. If you can't answer their question, put them in touch with someone that can or show them how to find their answers from valid sources.
- Speak down on production techniques you don't use or disagree with. We all produce food for the same common goal.
- Argue. Nothing good ever comes from arguing. You'll most likely intensify the bitter taste in their mouth for Ag.
- Say you can't make a difference just by talking to one person

In all reality, many of us have had our eyes opened just by getting a glimpse into someone else's life. So why don't we do the same for the public's eye on Agriculture? In truth the future of

Ag depends on what we do now as producers, and the education we provide the up and coming generations that will be voting for or against Agriculture. You want Ag to stick around? Then use your voice and make a change.