Who needs to know what and when do they need to know it?

Module 9 – Communicate Findings

Learning Objectives

- At the end of the presentation, participants should be able to:
  - Explain the importance of outbreak communications
  - Know who to contact for communications guidance
  - Describe the best practices in outbreak communications
  - Develop clear and concise messages
  - Identify basic structure in outbreak investigation reports
  - Discuss benefits of integrating communication in overall outbreak management

Overview

- Challenges of Outbreak Communications
- Outbreak Communication Best Practices
- Developing Messages
- Preparing an Outbreak Investigation Report

Disease outbreaks

- Unpredictable
- Create anxiety
- Socially and economically disruptive
- Newsworthy
- Role of human behavior in transmission

Stakeholders/Audiences

- Internal to VS
- Collaborators/Partners
- External Audiences

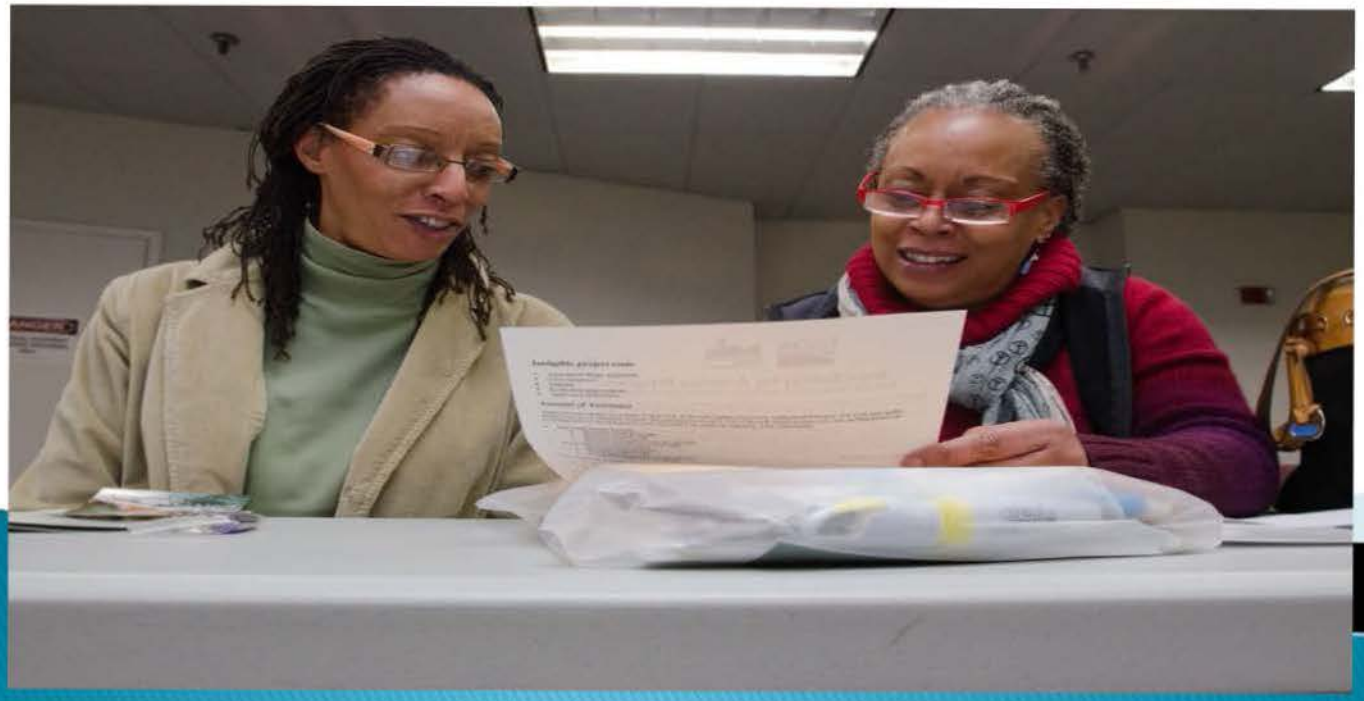
Outbreak Communication – challenges

- Public expectations
- Increased workload
- Coordination among agencies is crucial

Who can help with challenges?

- Contact APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs (301-851-4100)
  - Stakeholders only (no media involvement), Hallie Zimmers, Stakeholder Liaison (202-799-7029 or hallie.zimmers@aphis.usda.gov)
  - Media: Workabeba (Abby) Yigzaw, lead public affairs specialist for VS, (301-851-4096 or workabeba.yigzaw@aphis.usda.gov)
  - APHIS Media Coordinator: Lyndsay Cole, 970-494-7410 or lyndsay.m.cole@aphis.usda.gov
- Contact Cindy Ragin – Outreach Coordinator for VS

Outbreak Communication Best Practices



#1 – Build Trust

- Overriding goal – Communicate in ways that build, maintain or restore **TRUST**
- Public trust comes from perception of the authorities
  - Motives
  - Honesty
  - competency

#2 – Announce Early

- First communication often most important
- Likely to be wrong
- Provide “known” information at the time
- Avoid absolutes

When officials are concerned, the public should be warned

#3 – Transparency

- Transparent communication
  - Candid
  - Easily understood
  - Complete
  - Accurate
- Defining limits to transparency (e.g. client confidentiality)
- Transparency results in greater trust!

#4 – Respect Public Concerns

- Public concerns legitimate and respected
- Consider all "publics"
  - Those at risk, media, researchers, community leaders, trade partners, tourists, etc.

Developing Messages

Developing Messages

- When creating a message, consider

Audience	Purpose of Message	Channel/Format
Relationship to the event	Give facts/update	Spokesperson
Demographics	Rally to action	Print media
Level of outrage	Clarify event status	Web
	Address rumors	Radio
	Satisfy media request	

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Creating Clear, Concise Messages

- Message map
  - 3 key messages with supporting materials
- Brief
  - 27 words (9 seconds)
- Understandable
  - 2–4 grade levels below audience average
- Leave room for unknown information
- Use positive terms
  - Avoid “no” or “do not”

Message Map

Title of Map
Stakeholder: e.g general public, media, etc
Question or concern: e.g. what should we know about E.coli transmission?
Overarching message (short form) Three sentences and 27 words at most, stated as simply as possible.

Key message 1	Key Message 2	Key message 3
Most important message here	Least important message here	Second most important message here
Supporting Information 1-1	Supporting information 2-1	Supporting information 3-1
Supporting information should add detail to overarching and key messages.		
Supporting information 1-2	Supporting information 2-2	Supporting information 3-2
Supporting information 1-3	Supporting information 2-3	Supporting information 3-3

Message Map – example

Title of Map Stakeholder: general public Question or concern: What is avian influenza (HPAI H5N1) ? Overarching message: AI infects wild and domestic birds, humans are rarely infected, USDA has experience eradicating the disease		
Key message 1	Key Message 2	Key message 3
AI is a virus that infects wild and domestic birds	USDA has experience eradicating AI in the US	People are rarely infected by H5N1
Supporting Information 1-1	Supporting information 2-1	Supporting information 3-1
AI is highly fatal to birds	Federal, state and industry partners will work together to quickly eradicate HPAI	Only 200 people to date have contracted AI
Supporting information 1-2	Supporting information 2-2	Supporting information 3-2
AI is a disease that typically affects birds, not people	600 veterinarians and 1300 experts capable of assisting	People with extensive contact with sick birds most at risk
Supporting information 1-3	Supporting information 2-3	Supporting information 3-3
Store bought chicken and turkey safe to eat	Report sick or dead birds to local, state or USDA officers	No evidence that the virus spreads easily from person to person

Non-Verbal Communication

Positively perceived non-verbal communication	
Excellent eye contact	Honest, open, competent, caring, empathetic, sincere, dedicated, confident, knowledgeable, interested, respectful
Sitting slightly forward in chair	Interested, enthusiastic, concerned, cooperative
Open hands	Open, sincere
Speaking outdoors in low-wind conditions	Dedicated, hardworking, involved, concerned
Hands to chest/heart region	Open, honest, dedicated, sincere
Erect posture	Self-confident, self-controlled, assertive, determined
Lowering voice	Self assured, honest, caring

Basic Message Components

1. Express empathy
2. Tell what you know
3. Tell what you don't know
4. Dealing with the problem
5. Commitment
6. Sources of information

Example: Create a Message

- HPAI H5N1 has caused the culling of 100,000 birds during the past week in SE Asia
- In the past 3 days poultry in S. California have become sick and died. Lab results available in 12-24 hours
- No vaccine or drugs are known to be effective
- USDA is operating on assumption that this is same bird flu reported in SE Asia
- USDA is working closely with producers to identify other sick birds

Example: Create a Message

1. Expression of empathy and caring
   - "We've all been hearing news about the bird flu and we are concerned about what we might be facing in our communities."

2 Confirming facts
   - "In the past 3 days, poultry in one county in Southern California have become ill and died. Today, commercial poultry in several more counties have died with clinical signs typical of avian influenza."

Example: Create a Message

3. What you don't know about the situation
   - "Many strains of bird flu exist; we cannot conclusively identify the strain at this time."
4. Process to deal with the problem
   - "However, specimens have been sent to the laboratory and we are awaiting the results. In the mean time, we continue to investigate and are working to contain the outbreak."

Example: Creating a Message

5. Statement of commitment
   - "This situation and our knowledge about the outbreak will continue to evolve. We will provide daily updates to the website: www.USDAHPAI.org
6. Where people can get more information
   - We have established a public hot line to answer people's questions and have important information on our website. The number to call is 1-800-XXX-XXXX. The website is website: www.USDAHPAI.org

Outbreak Investigation Report

- What
  - Findings during different stages of the outbreak investigation
- Why
  - Document actions and results
  - Share new insights
  - Provide a record of performance
  - Verify and substantiate recommendations
- In order to:
  - Enhance quality of investigations
  - Prevent future outbreaks
  - Assist investigation and control of similar incidents
  - Provide a document for potential legal issues

Outbreak Investigation Report

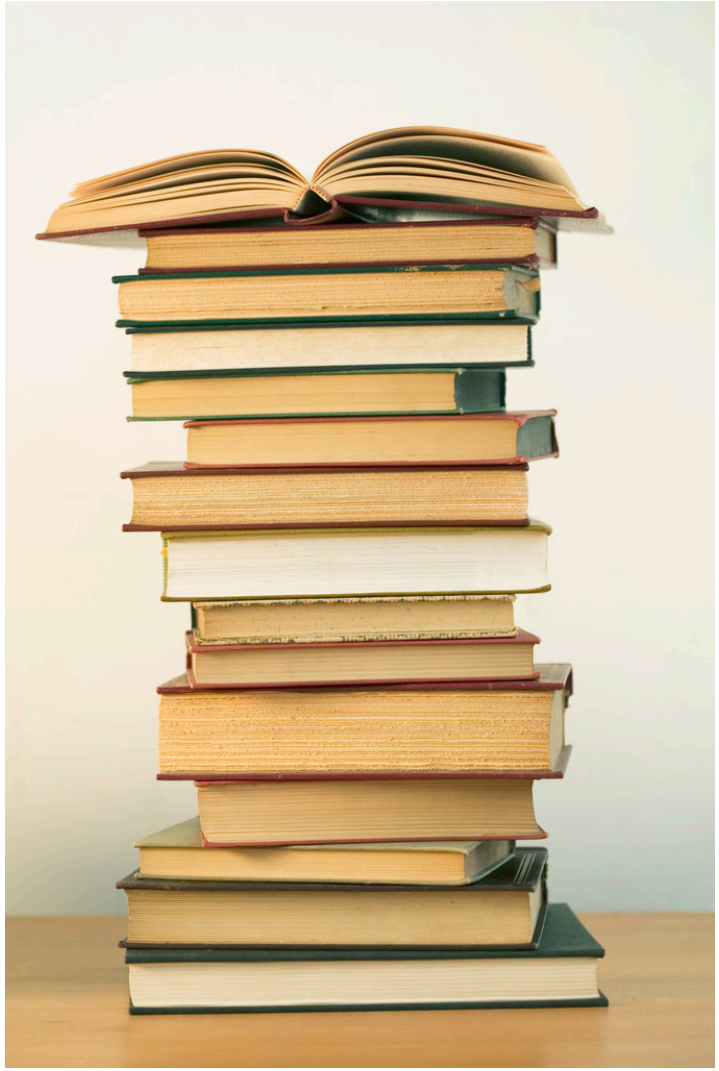
- Who writes
  - Outbreak investigation team and others as assigned
- When
  - When investigation is ‘complete’
  - When investigation is ‘ongoing’
- Who reads
  - Agencies involved in outbreak investigation and response
  - Policy making bodies, professional colleagues
  - The public, lawyers, the media

Outbreak Investigation Report: Basic Structure

- Summary
- Introduction and Background
- Methods and Results
- Discussion and Lessons Learned
- Recommendations
- References and Acknowledgements

Outbreak Investigation Report: Challenges

- Writing reports
- Confidentiality
- Accountability



Summary

- Challenges of Outbreak Communications
- Outbreak Communication Best Practices
- Developing Messages
- Preparing an Outbreak Investigation Report

Target Communications to Specific Audiences

Built on trust, effective outbreak communication will help speed up control

References

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The Peter M. Sandman Risk Communication Website. www.psandman.com

Acknowledgements

- This presentation is adapted from the World Health Organization's Outbreak Communication materials: www.who.org