

## Chapter 25

### Media Contacts and Public Relations

NPA employees must promptly notify the ARS Information Staff of any contacts by the media. The ARS Information Staff will then immediately pass the information to the USDA Communication Office.

It is ARS policy that BEFORE anyone does an interview with “major media,” no matter what they are calling about, they need to call the ARS Information Staff before agreeing to do the interview. If the subject matter is considered controversial or a prominent issue (high profile, special interests topic, dual use), a call needs to be made to the ARS Information Staff before agreeing to do the interview. If the subject matter is not “controversial” or not a “prominent issue” and the media outlet is local/small (local TV station or local radio station), it’s OK to do the interview and then contact the ARS Information Staff. If there are any doubts/concerns as to whether the subject matter might be considered “controversial,” or whether the media outlet should be considered “local” versus “major,” check with the ARS Information Staff prior to doing any interviews.

After the interview, the following information needs to be immediately provided to the ARS Information Staff (via email):

- Date of contact
- Name of contact
- Media source (newspaper, magazine, radio, etc.)
- Subject matter
- Information given
- Any other pertinent information

Acronyms: See [Chapter 22](#) for a comprehensive list of commonly used acronyms.

Reference: [DR 1440-2 - Communications Coordination and Review Policy](#)

Cross Reference: [Chapter 11](#) - Manuscripts

Web Site: Information Staff Services  
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services>

Attachment: Notification of Information Staff Concerning Important Papers

<b>Points of Contact:</b>	<b>Forward a copy of your e-mail to:</b>
Sandy Miller Hays Director USDA-ARS-Information Staff 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Room 1-2251 Beltsville, MD 20705 Telephone: (301) 504-1636 Fax: (301) 504-1648 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:sandy.millerhays@ars.usda.gov">sandy.millerhays@ars.usda.gov</a>	Olga Lee Management Analyst USDA-ARS-NPA 2150 Centre Ave., Bldg. D, Suite 300 Fort Collins, CO 80526-8119 Telephone: (970) 492-7057 Fax: (970) 492-7065 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:olga.lee@ars.usda.gov">olga.lee@ars.usda.gov</a>

The Information Staff is organized into two branches: “Current Information Branch” and “Information Products and Services Branch.” The Current Information Branch is the group that includes the writers who come to visit you and write about your work for the ARS New Service and Ag Research Magazine. “Your” writer is also the person who works with you on getting the media to your lab or location event; just think of them as your full-service “press agent.” The Information Products and Services Branch (IPS) can help you design a brochure, publish a book, or develop a display for your location for a specific event; they’re specialized in technical publication as well as graphic design.

The Information Staff has two daily news services, one in English and one in Spanish. The English-language daily news service is called “ARS New Service,” and the Spanish-language daily news service is called “El Servicio Noticiero.” The ARS New Service has approximately 2,200 subscribers. Of that 2,200 subscribers, more than 1,000 are “anybody who’s anybody” in the new business: CNN, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Business Week, U.S. News and World Reports, etc.

It is very easy to subscribe: If you go to the ARS website (<http://www.ars.usda.gov>), click on the “News and Events” link on the left. Once you get to the News and Events page, the current day’s story is right in the middle of the page, and underneath that first sentence of the story, there’s a hyperlink for “Subscribe.” Click on that link, and you can then choose whether you want to get the “news” in English or Spanish, and daily or weekly.

The Information Staff also produce videos for you – anything from a 90-second “video news release” to a longer “video feature.” They take care of the entire process, from script development to making duplicate copies of the finished video...but you need to be aware that your location pays the cost on videos, and it’s typically \$1,500 per minute for finished running time (so a 10-minute video would probably cost in the neighborhood of \$15,000).

If you’re not sure who “your” writer is, it’s easy to find out. Go to this website: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services>. On the page that appears, click on the red box (left side of the page) that says “Research News.” Then, on the next page that appears, click on the hyperlink “CI Writer.” From there, you should have no trouble finding out which Info Staff writer “covers” your lab, and how to contact them. And yes, it’s fine for you to contact your writer to propose a story idea—either a story for Ag Research Magazine or for the ARS New Service.

Sandy Miller Hays, Director  
USDA-ARS-Information Staff



**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Research, Education and Economics  
Agricultural Research Service

July 17, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Notification of Information Staff Concerning Important Papers

**TO:** Center/Laboratory Directors  
Research Leaders

**FROM:** W.H. Blackburn, Area Director /s/

Are you or your scientists considering publishing your results in a scientific journal, such as Nature, Science, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), or other significant journal that has far reaching implications? Are you working with collaborators whose own institution is preparing a press release on a significant finding that lists you and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) as a collaborator? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, the ARS-Information Staff (IS) would like to know as soon as possible. IS had several instances lately where a possibility existed for ARS to have a really great story about a scientist's research, but found out too late in the game to get the ARS News Service story written and cleared in time to come out at the same time as the journal article or the collaborator's press release. If the collaborators decide to develop a press release or news feed that mentions the ARS scientists, ARS or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), it is USDA policy that the collaborator must review the release before it goes out.

We understand the necessity for keeping information and articles from public consumption until after the article has been published online or in print. However, that does not preclude you from working with IS to prepare releases and news feeds ahead of the publication so they can prepare the necessary information and get it cleared through the Department (a process that can take several days). If a collaborating institution releases a news story, it precludes the possibility of ARS releasing something similar and receiving credit for our ARS research. Often the other institution may or may not mention ARS, thus an opportunity is lost.

In these days of flat resources, it is extremely important we convey to the public the good work ARS does while utilizing taxpayer's resources. If we wait until the paper is published, a period of several weeks may ensue before the news release can be prepared, approved and made public. In the meantime, either the Journal or the collaborator may release the story.



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Natural Resources Research Center • 2150 Centre Ave • Bldg D • Suite 300 • Fort Collins, CO 80526-8119  
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IS has an excellent reputation for working with collaborating institutions, writing stories, allowing scientists to comment on the language, then disseminating widely the information.

We are requesting you and your staff work with IS should a major breakthrough occur in your research unit. Please keep the Area Office 'in the loop' as you communicate with IS.

If you have any questions, please contact Sandy Miller Hays. Sandy can be reached at 301-504-1636 or [sandy.millerhays@ars.usda.gov](mailto:sandy.millerhays@ars.usda.gov).

cc:

AOs

Secretaries

L. Chandler

M. McGuire

M. Wiggett

S. Miller Hays