

## AgriLife Extension Social Media Guidelines

*This document has been developed to provide guidance on the engagement of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension personnel in various social media outlets. These guidelines refer to the publication and commentary on social media by employees of Extension. Social media refers to any social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and any associated outlets. The most current version of this document will be maintained and hosted on the [AgriLife Extension employee website](#). For further direction refer to the [Texas A&M University System social media guidance](#).*

The decision to use social media tools is a business decision based on an institution or agency's specific needs and the appropriate scope of its use. Before starting a social media program, consult with the Associate Director for Extension Communications on strategy to ensure that the proposed program not only supports the agency's strategic plans and objectives, but that it is also sustainable.

The A&M System expects employees and contractors engaging in social media on its behalf to ensure that content is kept current, posts are made consistently and responses are timely. **Any A&M System-affiliated social media sites with no activity for 90 days or more should be inactivated.**

- All county-level AgriLife Extension social media activity should be done through a designated AgriLife Extension social media account and not through an employee's personal social media account.
- Each unit participating in social media will designate two points of contact for its social media efforts and [provide that contact information](#) to the Associate Director for Extension Communications for coordination purposes.
- Social media should not interfere with other job duties or commitments but act as a positive enhancement of program goals and promotion.

### PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

All Extension employees using social media for personal use should maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional uses. When your social media activity is observable by endusers, stakeholders, and/or other professional audiences, your behavior should represent you well and reflect positively on Extension. When using social media personally, do not incorporate Extension's name into your username (NOT "Extensiondude" or "AgriLifeGal"), and do not assert that you are speaking for Extension.

*Any personal views should be expressed as yours only and not on behalf of the Texas A&M University System or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Any blogs, opinion pieces or websites with opinions should also include a disclaimer denoting the views expressed are yours and not on behalf of the A&M System or its entities. Further employee guidelines on personal social media use are listed at: <https://www.tamus.edu/marcomm/socialmedia/employee-guidelines/>*

## PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Social media is a more casual form of communication, but we must maintain credibility, or our educational efforts are useless. Extension's credibility in the social media world, just as in the real world, depends upon your credibility. An important element of your credibility will be your ability to communicate authentically and respectfully as a member of the community. All media, posts, tags, and other associated terms and actions from social media outlets are representative of the employees of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. It is best to follow all guidelines issued below:

- Respect copyrights of all content sources
- Plagiarism is still unacceptable, be sure to cite all content
- Maintain a professional communication style • Be sure to check grammar, spelling, tone, etc.

It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

## CONTENT

Remain neutral; provide information for informed decisions; do not advocate (advance progress by informing readers about best practices; alternatives and consequences). Do not endorse or disparage products; beware promoting groups.

## DEALING WITH TROLLS AND NEGATIVE COMMENTS

If anyone posts something profane or inappropriate to an Extension social media page, hide it or delete it without comment. Don't re-post, even to point out its errors. If someone repeatedly posts inappropriate content, they are considered a troll and should be blocked using the tools available in that medium.

Negative comments or misinformed comments can be treated as a learning and educational point. Be sure to respond in a non-confrontational way. If a person states opinions, leave the posts up as long as they are not offensive. Use your best judgment with negative comments and trolls.

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHPROGRAMS

Social media guidelines for health programs are receiving an update because of the nature of health programs potentially identifying a person's health status (i.e. it is reasonable for people to see a picture of a person attending Cooking Well with Diabetes and assume the person has diabetes). Due to the nature of health programs being sensitive to some participants willingness to share with others that they are involved in a program, please ensure that you are following the social media guidelines below:

1. When asked to participate in a partner's event (i.e. provide educational content, host an educational exhibit, etc.) please ask them about their policy for taking pictures and posting on social media. We should defer to the policy of our partner in times where they request no photos of participants or clients be taken. An alternative to this is to have someone take a picture of you providing the program or working the exhibit that does not include participants or clients in the photo and then use that picture.
2. When you are hosting an event on behalf of AgriLife Extension (one of our health education programs), before the start of the program announce that you may be taking pictures of the program for use on social media. Request that any participants not wanting to be featured in the photographs see you after class. Please respect participants privacy and delete those pictures.
3. Please continue following agency social media guidelines related to using official AgriLife Extension social media pages (program or county specific) for posting versus using personal pages.

We recognize and appreciate the strengths social media provides in terms of marketing programs and sharing our successes and want to continue fostering that in a way that is both helpful to county programs and respectful of participants privacy.

## TUTORIALS AND RESOURCES

Learn how to create a Facebook page and more at: <https://extcomm.teachable.com/>

Additional online courses for AgriLife Extension social media use are available at: <https://agrilife.remote-learner.net>. Click on the Employee Development section, look for the course title: Social Media in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, click on the name of the course to enter, then log in or create a new account.

## FACEBOOK

Be sure to review the following resources:

- [How to Create or Edit a Facebook Page](#)
  - [Facebook Page Template Information](#) - Go to File > Download As > Microsoft Word (.docx). Edit template as needed.
  - Facebook's [Getting Started Information](#)
  - Before advertising on Facebook, please enroll in [Facebook's blueprint courses](#)
1. Utilize a professional Facebook page, not a personal profile
    - Company, Organization or Institution
      - Category: Education
  2. [Facebook Page Name](#)
    - Place county or program name first, then the agency name
      - Example: Carson County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
      - Example: Carson County 4-H - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
  3. Facebook [Username](#)
    - Example: @carson-txext
  4. Facebook [Profile Picture](#)
    - Create a [square profile picture](#) using the free version of [Canva](#) with the [AgriLife Extension logo](#) and County or Program name below white line
      - Examples: on [maroon background](#), on [white background](#)
  5. Facebook [Cover Photo](#)
    - Make sure it looks appropriate for the account - ex. Ag, FCS, county themed
  6. Facebook > Settings
    - On the Facebook page, click the 'Settings' link near upper right
    - General
    - Visitor posts – select 'review posts by other people before they are published to the Page'
    - Country Restrictions - add United States then select 'Only show this Page to viewers in these countries'
    - Turn on profanity filter and set to: Strong
    - Page Updates - uncheck 'Automatically publish posts when info is updated on this Page'
    - Post Attribution

- Select post as your page and not as your personal account
  - Page Roles
  - Establish at least two page administrators
  - Notify the Extension Marketing and Communications Manager of designated page administrators for coordination purposes using this form:  
<http://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/fb/>
7. About > Edit Page Info
- General
    1. Category - Agriculture, Education
    2. Name - [county or program name] - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
  - Business Info
    1. Created in 1915  
*Mission: Through the application of science-based knowledge, we create high-quality, relevant continuing education that encourages lasting and effective change.*
  - Contact Info
    1. Enter primary phone number that will be answered
    2. Enter email address for primary account that will be monitored
    3. Enter website address
    4. Add other links to social media accounts
  - More Info
    1. About: *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides programs, tools, and resources that teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen our communities, and enrich youth.*
    2. Founding Date: *The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service was formally established in 1915 after the 1914 passing of the Smith-Lever Act and in conjunction with Texas A&M University.*
    3. Privacy Policy link:  
<https://www.tamus.edu/marcomm/socialmedia/public/>
  - Story
    - **Add a story for your county -or- copy and paste this text:**  
*The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a unique education agency with a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers, and county offices. It reaches into every Texas county to address local priority needs. Some of our major efforts are in mitigating drought impacts; conserving water use in homes, landscapes, and production agriculture; improving emergency management; enhancing food security; and protecting human health through education about diet, exercise, and disease prevention and management.*

*AgriLife Extension demonstrates the latest technology and best practices to improve the state's food and fiber system, which serves all Texas consumers and contributes nine percent of the gross domestic product. Texas 4-H, our primary youth program, engages some 600,000 youth every year in learning projects, leadership development, and community service.*

Learn more: <http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/about/who-we-are/>

- Click the 'Edit Page Info' link near the upper right corner of the About page. The 'Edit your details' box will open. Click the 'Location' tab.
    1. Select 'Has a street address' if necessary. Add location address.
    2. Select if people can visit you at this location.
    3. Zoom in on map and review map marker location.
    4. Add hours of operation
8. Facebook Page Content & Activity Suggestions from the Communications Team
- Promote Extension events
  - Repost content from/links to related sources (main AgriLife Extension page, AgriLife Today, Dinner Tonight, media interview/segments, Morning Ag Clips,)
  - Cross-promote link to Facebook page in presentations, website, etc. ○ Publish at least one original post per week
  - Share, like or comment on other reputable posts multiple times per week
  - Thoroughly inspect all shared links and webpages on a mobile device before sharing. Make sure web pages load quickly without usability errors such as pop-ups or intrusive advertisements.
  - Live video applications (i.e.; Facebook Live) should only be used with thorough preparation and planning to ensure quality content and production.
    - *See Facebook Live Video Guidelines at the end of this document*

#### TWITTER ([See Getting Started](#))

1. Complete Twitter Name (20 character limit)
  - Example: Carson Co. Extension
  - Example: Carson Co. 4-H
2. Twitter [Username](#) (15 character limit) ○ If one already exists, leave as is
  - For new accounts, an example could be: @carsoncoext or @armstrongcoext
3. Twitter [Profile Image](#) ○ Create a [square profile image](#) using [Canva](#) with the [AgriLife Extension logo](#) and County or

Program name below white line

- Examples: on [maroon background](#), on [white background](#)

4. Twitter [Header Photo](#)

- Use a custom one or the default cover image
  - Make sure it relates to the account
  - Create a [header photo image](#) with [Canva](#) using [AgriLife Extension logo](#)

5. Twitter [Bio](#) (160 character limit)

- If possible, the Twitter bio should contain the county name: *AgriLife Extension helps Texans better their lives in Brazos County through the application of science-based knowledge.*

6. Website Link

- Link to county or program website address

7. Activity

- Publish at least one original tweet per week
- Share, like or comment on other tweets or webpages from reputable and vetted sources multiple times per week
- Use shortened links to web content – [Bitly](#) or use Owly links via a free [HootSuite.com](#) account
- Ask other accounts to follow you (include link in presentations, materials, etc.)
- Resources for reposted content:
  - [AgriLife Extension \(@txextension\)](#)
  - [AgriLife Today \(@agriflifelife\)](#)
  - [Dinner Tonight \(@DinnerTonightAg\)](#)
  - [Walk Across Texas \(@walkacrosstexas\)](#)
  - [Junior Master Gardner \(@JMGKids\)](#)
  - [USDA NIFA \(@USDA\\_NIFA\)](#)
- Thoroughly inspect all online web pages and properties on a mobile device before sharing. Make sure web pages load quickly without usability errors such as pop-ups or intrusive advertisements.

## FACEBOOK LIVE VIDEO GUIDELINES

It is strongly recommended that all social media publishing activity be done through an official Texas A&M AgriLife Extension social media account and not through a personal social media account.

### I. Before Streaming Live Video

- Prepare, complete and practice your live presentation using a [script outline](#)
  - Prepare welcome messages and schedule upcoming live presentation notices
  - Complete a Title and Description for later posting of video to page album
  - Email other employees and ask them to share notices about upcoming live video and for their followers to like and interact during the live feed to increase the likelihood that your video will show up at the top of other news feeds
- Technology requirements
  - Make sure you have logged onto a strong Wi-Fi connection, or have a full connection to 4G or LTE network
  - Facebook app is up to date
  - Mobile device is set to silent mode
- Camera set up:
  - If necessary, clean camera lens with a microfiber or clean soft cotton cloth
  - Remove case or cover if it obstructs the camera lens
  - Mount or secure the camera so that it is at -or- near eye-level and will not shake or move too much during the live video feed
  - If holding the camera, practice firmly holding the camera to minimize movement and shake
  - Finally, remove any distractions in the background that will show up behind you in the video, pay careful attention to distracting sounds like air-conditioners, lights, doors opening and closing, cars, animals, etc.
- Test recording
  - Take a test video by opening the default camera app on your device. Turn on the selfie camera so that you can see the home screen and have the camera point at you at the same time.
  - Center yourself in the screen so that you are clearly seen from the mid-chest up to the top of your head. Leave a little space at the top incase the video is cropped in the Facebook feed. Record at eye-level and not underneath nose.
  - Record a test video and read sample text for about 5 seconds and then stop recording
  - Review test recording at 80% volume and make sure you can clearly be heard and that the camera is at a good angle, etc.



## II. Going Live with Facebook

Source: <https://live.fb.com/about/>

Steps to broadcast live video:

1. Select “Live Video” from the post menu.
2. Add a description and choose your audience before hitting “Go Live.” You’ll see a three-second countdown before your broadcast begins!

How do I know if a video is live?

- There will be a red icon at the top left-hand corner of the video indicating that it is a live video. The word “Live” is written next to the icon, along with the number of current viewers.

What happens to the Live video after the broadcast ends?

- The video will be published to the Page or profile so that fans and friends who missed it can watch at a later time. The broadcaster can remove the video post at any time, just like any other post.

Where do Live videos show up on Facebook?

- Videos will appear in News Feed and on the broadcaster’s Page or profile while they are live. Once a broadcast has ended, live videos are eligible to show up everywhere that other videos appear.

How do you rank live videos in News Feed?

- We recently made a small update to News Feed so that Facebook Live videos are more likely to appear higher in News Feed when those videos are actually live, compared to after they are no longer live.

Is there a time limit for Live broadcasts?

- Live broadcasts can last up to four hours.