
Talking with Consumers



What do I say? Start by listening.

You can learn a lot about the person by listening and asking questions about her concerns and interests. Find out what's important to her in regard to her food and how it's grown.

How you answer questions is as important as the words you use. Remember it's not us vs. them. **We're all consumers and we all eat.**

We need to be truthful and open, but also willing to address their concerns without being defensive when consumers ask us the tough questions. Dialogue is two-way communication. Think about having a conversation instead of making a speech.

From the moment you begin a conversation with a mom or another consumer, she's already evaluating you. Just like you, she has a filter through which she evaluates what she hears from you. When you talk with a mom, she is evaluating whether you care about her, her family and her world. She's weighing your honesty, competency and confidence as she determines whether she can trust you.

It may be helpful to use words that consumers relate to the most. Certain words you take for granted may have different meanings for consumers. For example, the term "production agriculture" makes consumers think of factories and corporate farms.

As you have a conversation, think about the words you use:

Rather than:

Producers	Try	Farmers
Production practices	Try	How food is grown Farming
Produced	Try	Grown and raised
Good food	Try	Healthy food
Self-policing or code of conduct	Try	Best practices or ethical standards
Livestock	Try	Animals
Sustainable or sustainability	Try	Wise use of, or preserving resources Growing more with less
Operation	Try	Farm

Conversations focused on efficiency, profits, productivity or speed fail to resonate with consumers.

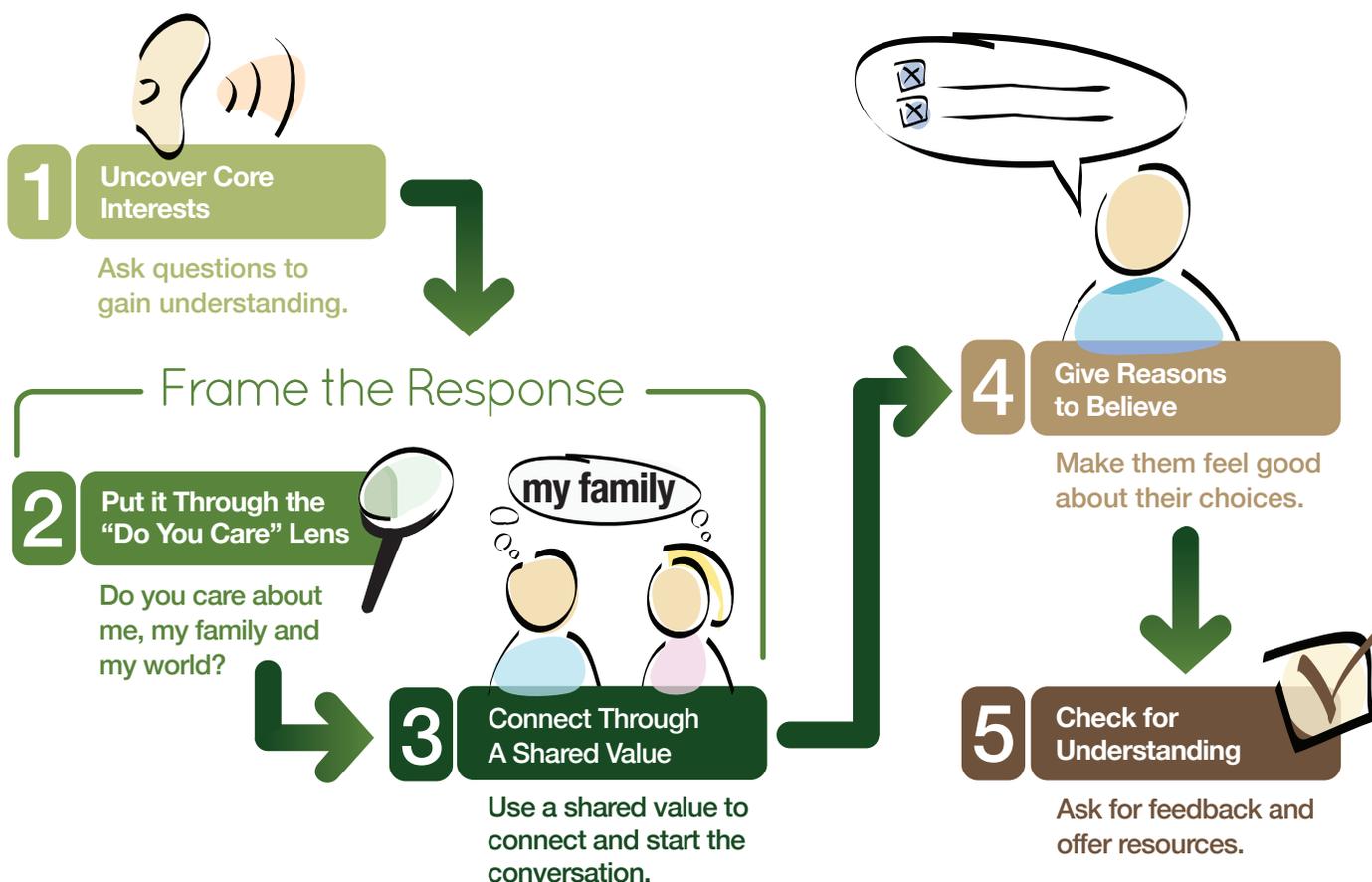
How do I answer consumers' questions?

It's a journey, not a destination. When we talk with consumers we will focus on listening and answering questions.

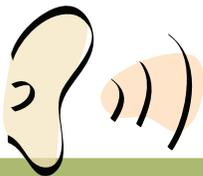
We are not delivering prepared messages; rather we are speaking from our experiences in simple, everyday language consumers will understand. We are translating the farm experience.

Here's how we will have the conversation:

Translation Process



How do I answer consumers' questions?



1

Uncover Core Interests

Ask questions to gain understanding.

You're trying to bridge the gap between what the consumer knows and what you know, so you first need to find common ground.

This step is about clarification. Start by listening. Ask questions that uncover the consumer's core interest. Your first instinct may be to defend your actions, but that may lead you to a discussion neither you nor the consumer intended. Take the time to discover where her real interests lie.

Uncover Core Interests

What's my interest?

Clarify the core interests by asking questions.

Resist the temptation to defend.

Consumer statement:

I don't like antibiotics

I don't understand why they are used at all.

I hear they are used to make the animals grow faster.

Is there residue in the meat?

I'm concerned about the safety of the meat.

My core interests:

Use of antibiotics – application and frequency

Impact of antibiotics on the meat I serve my family

Farmer question:

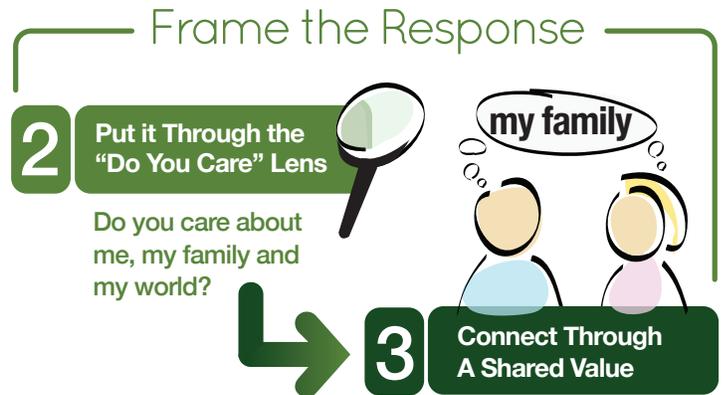
What don't you like about them?

What have you heard about how they are used?

Why does that bother you?

Why are residues of interest?

How do I answer consumers' questions?



2 Put it Through the "Do You Care" Lens

Do you care about me, my family and my world?

Once we have identified the core interest, there are two steps to consider as we frame the response.

First, we need to remember our consumer lens:

Do you care about me, my family and my world?

She wants to know if you care about the safety of the food you grow, your impact on the environment and the treatment of your animals.

By considering your response through this filter, you understand the mindset of the individual asking the questions. Remember a mom's key concern is her family and their health. She is listening to determine if you care as well.

Use a shared value to connect and start the conversation.

Put it Through the "Do You Care" Lens	Consumers care about:
<p>Consider how consumers think about your response.</p> <p>Do you care about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • me, my family and my world? • the safety of my food? • your impact on the environment? • your animals? 	<p>I hear that you use antibiotics to artificially grow the animals bigger. You are taking short-cuts to put profits ahead of the safety of my family.</p> <p>I've got two little girls at home. I want to protect their health.</p> <p>I don't know what the long-term impact of antibiotics will be on my family.</p> <p>I'm not sure the meat is safe.</p> <p>I don't think it's good for the animals.</p>

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3

Connect Through A Shared Value

Use a shared value to connect and start the conversation.

Secondly, as you think about your response, we are trying to connect with the consumer through a shared value. Make a statement that shows you share similar values as the consumer, such as family, health, wellness or protecting the environment. Weave in stories about your family and your farm.

At this step we're looking for the connection first. The details will come next. Remember, people trust peers. When they see that you care and have similar concerns, they are open to listening to you. They are forming an opinion about you and looking to trust you as a credible resource for their family.

Connect Through A Shared Value

Identify the shared value; then start the conversation.

Identify the shared value:

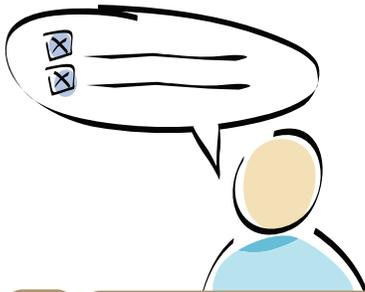
1. We have families we care about and want to keep healthy.
2. We want good treatment for our animals. We might be motivated differently, but ultimately we want the same thing.

Use the shared value to connect and start the discussion:

As a parent, undoubtedly, you take your child to the doctor for an ear infection or illness like strep throat. The doctor probably gives you an antibiotic to treat the illness.

The same holds true when one of my animals gets sick. I will work with my veterinarian to find the right medicine, to clear the illness and help get the animal feeling better again.

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4

Give Reasons to Believe

Make them feel good about their choices.

Now's your chance to share what you know and give some details. After all, you're an expert about your own farm. Keep it simple and not overly technical. Remember to put it in terms that consumers can understand.

Think about the last time you bought something. You probably did research before your purchase. And after you made the purchase you may have questioned whether you did the right thing, but then someone you trust comments on what a great decision you made which makes you feel even better.

We want to help consumers have that same good feeling about their food choices. You can provide them assurance through proof points. You'll be most credible by acknowledging both sides of an issue, good or bad. Cite governing bodies and experts when appropriate; moms are interested in knowing you turn to others to help you. Just as you probably feel comfortable knowing your doctor has certain credentials, so will consumers if they know you have to be certified to apply chemicals to your crops or that any medications used on your farm are overseen by a vet. Be aware that some consumers are skeptical about certain governing bodies while others will see them positively.

Give Reasons to Believe	Provide assurances; acknowledge both sides.
<p>List reasons consumers should trust you and the way you raise their food.</p> <p>Make them feel good about their choices.</p> <p>Tell about other professionals who help you.</p> <p>Talk about oversight, but realize there is skepticism.</p>	<p>You probably feel bad when one of your children doesn't feel well. You want to get them something to make them feel better. The same holds true for our animals; they get sick too.</p> <p>Antibiotics are used when an animal has certain illnesses or infections to help it recover. Just like the antibiotics your family takes, we use them to treat the illness and discontinue use when the animal is better.</p> <p>We know that overuse of antibiotics can make them less effective in treating a disease. Antibiotics cost me money. I only want to spend money on them when I have to. We use them only when necessary and only under the advice of our veterinarian to ensure we are treating the animal properly.</p> <p>Because there can be residues left behind from antibiotics, we watch the animal closely and give it plenty of time to recover to ensure any residue clears from its body. The FDA has very strict rules about when it is safe to sell an animal that has been treated with antibiotics.</p> <p>I am confident in feeding the meat I raise to my family, because I know that it is from a healthy animal and is safe to eat.</p>

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5

Check for Understanding



Ask for feedback and offer resources.

Don't forget to check if you've answered their question. Ask for feedback along the way. Find out if you're being too technical. You may have raised another question or roused interest. Be sure to explore those as well. Provide resources for more information. Offer to followup with additional information if necessary.

Check for Understanding

Ask if you have answered the question.

Turn to your industry experts and organizations.

Involve outside resources.

My trade organization has information on this subject. Here are some sources you may want to check for yourself:

www.factsaboutpork.org

Another resource for keeping animals healthy is the Animal Health Institute – its website is ahi.org.