

Appeared in Veterinary Economics, 2007

## **Series: PROMOTING YOUR PRACTICE THROUGH LOCAL PUBLICITY**

### ***Part Two: What is news?***

Last month, we discussed targeting media most likely to cover your story. Once you have identified your targets, the next step is to develop a story *angle* that will get the media's interest.

*News* is information that is timely, unique, relevant and of local interest. Your story angle should meet these criteria and showcase an important feature of your practice. At the same time, avoid information that is self-serving and fails to pass the news test as publicity. You will most likely be told: "Buy an ad."

Recognize the difference between "hard" and "soft" news. Hard news pertains to an immediate occurrence or event. Soft news is a feature story that has a longer shelf life and is just as interesting today or in a few months. In identifying hard or soft news angles, consider what pet owners want to know about in your area. New staff appointments, awards and accolades or a new location are examples easy to place local news. Increase relevancy and news value by relating your story to timely circumstances and occurrences:

- ❖ National trends (pet obesity, spay/neuter legislation, popularity of pocket pets, multiple pet ownership)
- ❖ Unique incident at your practice (near-fatal bee sting, miracle surgery, huge litter)
- ❖ Seasonal/holidays (insects, weather/temperature, food, decorations, festivities)
- ❖ National event (National Pet Dental Health Month, Spay Day USA)
- ❖ Local/national news (pet cruelty, rescue efforts, food recalls)

With any of the above, you can generate publicity by:

- ❖ Creating your own event (photo contest, first aid fair, disaster simulation)
- ❖ Offering expert advice (how to avoid hyperthermia, help your pet cope on long car rides, choose a pet food)
- ❖ Making an announcement (new facilities, state-of-the-art procedures)
- ❖ Suggesting a story idea (a day in the life of an emergency vet, a rescue dog's recovery)

Once you come up with an angle, match it to the appropriate media on your target list. Do you use a news release, email or phone call? Next month: Packaging your story.