

News Release Tips

(presented by AAHA and the AAHA Helping Pets Fund)

Developing and distributing news releases is an excellent way to attract the attention of the media, and it can be an effective way of raising public awareness about your fundraiser. Here are several easy steps to get you started.

- **Make your information newsworthy.** Think creatively about how to develop and package information about your fundraiser. Start your news release with a compelling “hook” that gets the readers attention. To make the release more personal and meaningful, consider weaving in a touching story about a pet that you recently helped. Then transition to the need for funds to support veterinary care and how people can help through your fundraiser. Include a quote from a practice member, pet owner, or notable local figure on the magnitude of the need.
- **Keep it short and simple.** Remember that editors and reporters are busy people and probably don’t have the time or energy to wade through loads of nonessential information. Your goal should be simply to spark their interest. One page is best, two at most.
- **Be sure you write the most important elements in the first paragraph.** Think about the stories you see in your local paper each day. Generally, they address the who, what, when, where, why, and how in the first two sentences. Additional information should make up the body of the release, and the conclusion should have general information about the AAHA Helping Pets Fund and your hospital.
- **Don’t be discouraged if all of your releases aren’t printed.** Continue sending releases with important and interesting news, and you’ll be able to maintain good rapport with your local media. They may even come to you first when they need a quote for a story—that’s free exposure for you.

Follow these tips when you write your release:

- List a phone number and contact person who can answer a reporter’s questions.
- List a date when the release was issued.
- Use letterhead on 8-1/2 x 11-inch paper to identify your hospital.
- Double-space and type the release.
- Limit each paragraph to two or three short sentences.
- Identify the end of the release by using ### or -30- centered on the line after the last line of the release.
- Make sure you have the correct media address and the right contact person. Double check the spelling of the editor’s name.
- Follow up with a call to the reporter or editor to make sure they received the release and offer additional information.