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control of foot-and-mouth disease

# Planning Risk Communication on foot-and- mouth disease

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## Guide

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European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease

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## Contents

Planning risk communication on foot-and-mouth disease: a guide .....	1
Application .....	1
Purpose .....	1
Background .....	1
Introduction .....	2
The Eight Steps.....	3
Step 1: WHY? (outcomes).....	4
1.1 Describe the risk .....	4
1.2 Describe the change you hope to see.....	4
1.3 Combine stakeholder perspectives with your vision for the future .....	4
Step 2: WHO? (Stakeholders) .....	6
2.1 Describe your stakeholders .....	6
2.2 Identify promoters and detractors .....	6
2.3 Identify opinion leaders .....	6
2.4 Prioritize your stakeholders in “peacetime” and outbreak scenarios .....	7
2.5 REVIEW – Think EPICally! .....	7
2.6 Further define your stakeholders .....	8
Step 3: HOW? (Tasks).....	11
3.1 Map your stakeholders by “the Five Tasks” .....	11
3.2 Review priority relationships .....	11
3.3 Be aware of communication-resistant scenarios.....	12
3.4 REVIEW – Think EPICally! .....	14
Step 4: WHAT? (Messages).....	15
4.1 Remember your basic messages.....	15
4.2 Create a messaging mix.....	15
4.3 Test your messages.....	17
4.4 REVIEW – Think EPICally! .....	17
Step 5: WHERE? (Channels and products) .....	18
5.1 Review channel preferences.....	18
5.2 Describe channels and products .....	18
5.3 Products are the “last” step.....	19
5.4 Combine channels, stakeholders and tasks to identify products .....	19
Step 6: WHEN? (Work plan).....	22
Step 7: WHICH RESOURCES? (Budget).....	22
Step 8: HOW EFFECTIVE? (Monitoring and evaluation).....	22

8.1 Develop indicators .....	23
8.2 Describe how indicators will be captured.....	23
8.3 Describe your revision protocol.....	23
Conclusion.....	23
Bibliography .....	25
Acknowledgements.....	26

**FIGURES**

<b>FIGURE 1:</b> EIGHT STEPS: the EPIC communication planning process .....	3
<b>FIGURE 2:</b> Hypothetical examples of outcomes: peacetime .....	5
<b>FIGURE 3:</b> Hypothetical examples of outcomes: during FMD outbreak.....	5
<b>FIGURE 4:</b> EPIC messaging mix.....	16

**TABLES**

<b>TABLE 1:</b> Peacetime stakeholders – hypothetical examples .....	9
<b>TABLE 2:</b> Communication task mapping – hypothetical example .....	13
<b>TABLE 3:</b> Empathetic “messaging mix” – hypothetical example .....	16
<b>TABLE 4:</b> Communication channel and product examples .....	19
<b>TABLE 5:</b> Products mapped to tasks – hypothetical examples .....	20

# PLANNING RISK COMMUNICATION ON FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE: A GUIDE

## Application

This guide is intended to be used by veterinary risk managers who are responsible for risk communication planning. It may also be of use to communication experts who are responsible for animal health risk communication planning.

Risk communication is most beneficial when tailored to specific contexts. Therefore, risk managers and communicators should carry out this planning process with their specific context in mind in order to produce a risk communication plan that is suited to the national and local situations in their country.

Ideally, this document should be used during the risk analysis process, which includes risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.<sup>1</sup> Even when a full risk analysis is not possible, veterinary and other relevant authorities are recommended to adopt a coordinated approach to communication planning. Options should be discussed with stakeholder groups, consensus should be reached, and plans refined accordingly. This consensus-based approach will result in more effective risk communication plans.

## Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide risk managers and communicators with a methodology for developing effective foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) risk communication strategies. The concepts presented can also be adapted to risk communication on other animal health threats. Eight steps help readers apply strategic and empathetic thinking to their own peacetime and crisis scenarios. With practice, readers learn how to better develop new plans or contribute to existing ones.

## Background

The document is based on the Emotional, Participatory, Imperfect and Continuous (EPIC) approach to risk communication developed by Cortney Price and adapted to animal health risk management by the author in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization staff.<sup>2,3</sup> This guide gives FMD-specific examples, which formed the outcome of two EuFMD Workshops on “Managing a Crisis”, which took place in Budapest, Hungary, from 13 to 16 September 2016 and Kaunas, Lithuania, from 19 to 22 March 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Risk Governance” concept by D. Pfeiffer of RVC provides a useful framework.

<sup>2</sup> See the EPIC Risk Communication and Behaviour website: [www.epicrisk.org](http://www.epicrisk.org)

<sup>3</sup> See webinar: Price (2018). See also References section for formative literature.

## Introduction

Risk communication is often interpreted as the ad-hoc dissemination of technical information from experts to laypersons. However, this one-way messaging can be ineffective or even counter-productive when promoting cooperation. Applying the EPIC approach can help. By adding strategy and empathy, EPIC can make risk communication more effective in creating opportunities for dialogue, understanding and collaborative action.

EPIC Risk Communication is characterized by **four qualities**:

- **E** motional: Arouses intense feelings when appropriate
- **P** articipatory: Engages in a two-way, dynamic process
- **I** mperfect: Recognizes uncertainty, takes action even when information is lacking and allows for corrections as more information becomes available
- **C** ontinuous: Communicates proactively and regularly

The **philosophy** behind these four qualities is described as follows:

- **Emotional**: Our decisions about a risk are based on both what we think about a risk and how its consequences make us feel. In fact, our feelings are often more important than our thoughts or knowledge. **Arousing emotions** (e.g. care, concern, fear, frustration) can make risk communication more effective.
- **Participatory**: No individual or organization has all the answers. Even the most knowledgeable expert may not know the best way forward. Only through **discussion and exchange** can people come to a common understanding about risk. Listening to people's perceptions without judgment demonstrates respect and builds credibility and trust. Participation is also the best way to foster **group ownership of decisions**, which makes people more likely to carry them out.
- **Imperfect**: What we know (and do not know) about a risk changes over time, yet our need for information is constant. **Sharing what we know** as soon as possible – especially during a crisis – is more important than being absolutely correct. **Sharing what we do not know** helps build credibility and invites audiences to contribute information and to view us as a trusted partner. Regular updates allow us to add details later as they become known. We should **recognize and correct our mistakes** over time and **apologize for our errors**, which are both inevitable and human.
- **Continuous**: Human beings are **always communicating**, whether they intend to or not. People will always infer some sort of message from our actions and behaviours, even if we remain silent or do nothing. **Avoiding communication is impossible**. Embracing this fact, EPIC risk communicators **communicate actively, intentionally and with regularity**.

EPIC challenges risk managers to find their own answers to a fundamental question: "How can I facilitate conversations that promote collaboration on risk reduction?" With EPIC, readers learn to develop their own, contextually appropriate messages, resulting in more impactful communication initiatives. Communication here means dialogue aimed at developing shared perceptions. Under EPIC, communication does not change behaviour; it creates opportunities for people to learn from one another. This document helps readers plan for those opportunities. The empathetic, strategic plans that result can make communication more likely to promote collaboration.

## The Eight Steps

EPIC organizes communication planning into eight steps. **FIGURE 1** below summarizes these eight steps. Each step is then described in detail and applied to FMD.



**FIGURE 1:** EIGHT STEPS: the EPIC communication planning process



## Step 1: WHY? (outcomes)



***“Why are you communicating? What are you hoping will happen as a result?”***

Outcomes help you focus on what matters. They describe the collaboration you need to manage FMD risks. Outcomes capture the “change you hope to see”, both in stakeholder behaviours and your own.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1 Describe the risk

Firstly, the risk should be characterised.<sup>5</sup> If no risk assessment has been conducted, initiate one immediately. In the meantime, describe your assumptions and commit to updating them later with risk assessment results.

### 1.2 Describe the change you hope to see

What do you need to do to address the risk? How should stakeholders contribute? What are they currently not doing?

*Example: To reduce the risk of incursion/spread of FMD, stakeholders should report suspicious cases.*

### 1.3 Combine stakeholder perspectives with your vision for the future

Outcomes should be:

- designed with the stakeholder in mind;
- relate directly to your risk reduction goals;
- ensure plausibility; and
- include a realistic deadline or time limit.

**FIGURE 2** and **FIGURE 3** below give examples of outcomes for peacetime and during an FMD outbreak respectively.

<sup>4</sup> OIE (2015, p. 15). While inspired by Strategic Overarching Communication Outcomes (SOCOs), EPIC Outcomes distinguish themselves in four key ways. They i) encourage empathy with stakeholder needs and emotive states (Emotional); ii) focus on a vision of the future that is jointly owned by authorities and stakeholders (Participatory); iii) accept that dialogue may reveal the need to modify Outcomes – and even well-crafted Outcomes can lead to missteps and corrections (Imperfect); and iv) plan for regular review/update (Continuous).

<sup>5</sup> Refer to Chapter 2.1 of OIE’s Terrestrial Animal Health Code as a starting point.

**FIGURE 2:** Hypothetical examples of outcomes: peacetime

Commercial livestock owners along border of endemic country increase reporting of suspect cases by DATE.
Commercial livestock owners begin regular vaccination of their FMD-susceptible animals within X years.
Commercial livestock owners with poor biosecurity reach a minimum biosecurity standard by DATE.
Treasury releases more funding for emergency preparedness and compensation.
Ministry provides media training for key staff and designates spokespersons within X months.
Politicians raise FMD-related livestock issues higher on national agenda within X years.
Livestock owners take more proactive measures to guard against FMD within X years.
Livestock owners in areas of historically low engagement increase requests to veterinary authorities for assistance by DATE.
Previously disconnected communities participate in new, participatory communication with the veterinary services within two years.
Veterinary schools offer new curricula in communication sciences within five years.

**FIGURE 3:** Hypothetical examples of outcomes: during FMD outbreak

Within one month of outbreak announcement, at-risk livestock owners volunteer to work with veterinary services to bring outbreak under control.
Transporters comply with movement ban within two weeks of declaration.
Livestock owners adopt/implement additional biosecurity measures within one week of outbreak.
Livestock owners comply with culling and accept new compensation schemes within two weeks.
Consumers continue purchasing meat and dairy products despite rumours of outbreak.
Non-commercial livestock owners comply with depopulation measures during an FMD outbreak.
Private veterinarians assisting the veterinary authorities during an FMD outbreak comply with assigned Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and ensure stakeholder communication is coordinated with government messaging.

## Step 2: WHO? (Stakeholders)



***“With whom do you need to work to reduce the risk of FMD incursion/spread? Whose collaboration is essential to risk reduction, and what are those people like?”***

The most useful tool in communication planning is knowledge of stakeholders. Without understanding their risk perceptions and points of view, you will only be guessing how to build trust. Without trust, you will struggle to foster collaboration. Without collaboration, your plans will fail, no matter how technically sound.

### 2.1 Describe your stakeholders

Continue working on the stakeholders revealed from Step 1. Identify priority stakeholders for reducing risk and the key attitudes that might influence their behaviour.<sup>6,7</sup> Participatory discussion and brainstorming can be used to identify stakeholders in the absence of studies, but this should only be considered as a temporary stopgap.

### 2.2 Identify promoters and detractors

Be sure to include information on potential promoters and detractors. Promoters are those stakeholders most likely to support your efforts, and every attempt should be made to secure their partnership. However, do not neglect detractors. Reviewing previous disease events and media reports can help identify these individuals or groups. Detractors are the people most likely to criticize or even impede your work. Planning must provide strategies for building relationships with detractors in peacetime and for managing their reactions during outbreaks.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.3 Identify opinion leaders

Opinion leaders are the individuals to whom communities listen most. Stakeholders are more likely to value an opinion or follow a piece of advice if it comes from an opinion leader.

Opinion leaders may be members of a specific stakeholder group, public personalities held in high esteem or even divisive characters known for sowing discord. Regardless of type, what opinion leaders say matters. Building a relationship with opinion leaders sympathetic to your cause can turn them into

<sup>6</sup> Discussion of stakeholders should begin as early as the risk assessment phase of your risk analysis process. Risk assessors and risk managers should develop a list of key actors prioritized by their role in reducing/exacerbating the risks in question. This information should then be combined with knowledge of the socio-cultural context to develop a broader idea as to the main stakeholders with which risk communicators will need to engage.

<sup>7</sup> Risk assessments and knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) studies are essential here.

<sup>8</sup> Sometimes the best action to take with the most steadfast detractors is to avoid them unless provoked. It is often not possible to communicate with the most convinced detractor. Moreover, not all detractors have significant influence on public opinion. In-depth understanding of your stakeholder groups is crucial here.

extremely powerful promoters. Disrespecting sceptical opinion leaders can make them excessively hurtful detractors.

The identity of the messenger can be more important than the message itself.<sup>9</sup> For example, when presenting scientific evidence, every effort should be made to engage opinion leaders whom the stakeholders perceive as independent. Stakeholders are more sceptical of data presented by a messenger they perceive as partial to a certain cause or authority, which may lead to them disregarding technical advice. Similarly, attempts to comment on societal norms or cultural practices related to FMD risks should be delivered by opinion leaders whose role is culturally appropriate. Cold or overly scientific criticism of a norm by an independent, unrelated messenger may cause stakeholders to reject a technically “correct” message.

#### 2.4 Prioritize your stakeholders in “peacetime” and outbreak scenarios

Develop two tables of stakeholders: one for peacetime and one for outbreaks. Prioritize your stakeholders according to their potential impact on risk reduction. Identify their perceptions, attitudes and incentives to collaborate according to knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) studies, focus group interviews or similar initiatives. Use your intuition if these resources are not available but commit to engaging in more formalized stakeholder fact finding as soon as possible. Even un-systematic discussions with random stakeholder groups are better than complete reliance on personal intuition and institutional knowledge/assumption.

Stakeholder risk perceptions can be characterized by Sandman’s formula:

$$\text{Risk (perception)} = \text{Hazard} \times \text{Outrage.}$$

Hazard here signifies “how much harm [the risk is] likely to do.” Outrage means “how upset it’s likely to make people.”<sup>10</sup>

**TABLE 1** below lists examples of peacetime stakeholders.

#### 2.5 REVIEW – Think EPICally!

Working through your stakeholder brainstorm may reveal impracticalities with your Outcomes (i.e. the change you **initially** hoped to see). Certain behaviours may not be possible because of a strong detractor presence; others may not be respectful of customs or livelihoods. Revisit Outcomes (Step 1) in light of your newly developed familiarity with stakeholders and update these Outcomes accordingly.

##### Apply EPIC principles to revise Outcomes:

- Emotional: How do your stakeholders feel about your Outcomes? Do they trust you enough to change? Could the changes create undue stress and lead to noncompliance?
- Participatory: What is the change your stakeholders hope to see in you? How will your actions contribute to their willingness to adopt new behaviours?<sup>11</sup>
- Imperfect: Where might your stakeholders know something you do not? How can you leave more room for them to correct you?

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<sup>9</sup> The “messenger effect” is a widely researched phenomenon that has been shown to have crucial impact on stakeholder reception of information. See Dolan *et. al.* (2012).

<sup>10</sup> See Sandman (2000-2018).

<sup>11</sup> Reciprocity is often a key element in establishing trust. New behaviours can be encouraged by changing your own behaviours in a form of exchange.

Continuous: What mechanism can you put in place to ensure Outcomes are updated regularly?

### 2.6 Further define your stakeholders

Think about the stakeholder groups involved in your Outcomes. You may realize you have defined the groups too broadly: they may contain a wide array of stakeholders with highly divergent attitudes. Take the time now to identify your stakeholders in more detail. For each Outcome, list the new, more specific stakeholders required to make that outcome a reality.

**TABLE 1:** Peacetime stakeholders – hypothetical examples

Stakeholders (prioritized)	Risk perception (hazard x outrage)	Risky behaviours, attitudes	Incentives for collaboration, attitudes	Potential opinion leaders
1. Commercial livestock owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: High</u> (potential for economic loss)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: Low</u> (over-confidence in existing measures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lapses in biosecurity application</li> <li>● Lack of disease recognition</li> <li>● Lack of reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Best practices also increase productivity</li> <li>● Fear of economic loss</li> <li>● Reputation</li> <li>● Legal obligation to comply</li> <li>● Learning about options how to continue after an outbreak happens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● President of livestock owners' association</li> <li>● Successful/ wealthy livestock owners</li> <li>● Religious/ community leaders</li> </ul>
2. Small-scale livestock owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: Low</u> (disbelief in the problem)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: Low</u> ("will never happen to me" attitude)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of biosecurity</li> <li>● Lack of disease recognition</li> <li>● Lack of reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fear of economic loss</li> <li>● Legal obligation to comply</li> <li>● Shame for bringing harm to the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Religious leaders</li> <li>● Community leaders/elders</li> </ul>
3. Food industry entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: High</u> (potential for economic loss)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: Low</u> (over-confidence in existing measures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cost saving measures lead to reduction in biosecurity</li> <li>● High turnover leads to employing less reputable value chain workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fear of economic loss</li> <li>● Legal obligation to comply</li> <li>● Learning about options how to continue after an outbreak happens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Head of successful/ wealthy food producing company</li> </ul>
4. Ministers / decision makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: High</u> (negative effects on national economy)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: Low</u> (many higher concerns)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Refusal to fund preparedness</li> <li>● Over-reliance on legal framework as motivation for public compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Long-term cost savings</li> <li>● Reputation management</li> <li>● Opportunity for political gain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nationally/ internationally recognized economists</li> <li>● Key lobbyists</li> <li>● Superiors</li> </ul>
5. Private vets working with large animal producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: High</u> (Know FMD)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: Med.</u> (Value the risk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overly adapt advice to client desires</li> <li>● Provide conflicting advice</li> <li>● Mainly motivated by profit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Major FMD incursion bad for business</li> <li>● Interest in latest and technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Head of private veterinary association</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1:** Peacetime stakeholders – hypothetical examples (continued)

Stakeholders (prioritized)	Risk perception (hazard x outrage)	Risky behaviours, attitudes	Incentives for collaboration, attitudes	Potential opinion leaders
6. Hobby animal owners (e.g. pet goat owners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: Med.</u> (Pets less likely to be infected)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: High</u> (emotional connection to animal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● False alarms overtax vet services</li> <li>● Lack of trust in national authorities</li> <li>● Over-reliance on private vets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commitment to health of animal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Private vets</li> <li>● TV/radio personalities</li> <li>● Religious/ community leaders</li> </ul>
7. Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: Low</u> (FMD does not affect public health)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: High</u> (extreme concern and confusion)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requests for exaggerated food safety regulations siphon funding from preparedness</li> <li>● Boycott of meat and dairy products upon outbreak rumour forces sector deeper into decline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Desire for quality food at a fair price</li> <li>● Interest in learning more about health issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nationally/ internationally recognized doctors or food safety specialists</li> <li>● TV/radio personalities</li> <li>● Religious/ community leaders</li> </ul>
8. Animal welfare advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: Low</u> (FMD response policies mean the few suffer so the majority don't)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: High</u> (emotional connection to animal, conviction over what's "right")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public outcry decreases support for VS actions</li> <li>● Protests incite disorder which compromises control measures</li> <li>● Civil disobedience along value chain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To express feelings</li> <li>● Desire to be listened to</li> <li>● Emotional connection to animals could be linked to vet emotions / purpose / motivations for greater good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● TV personalities</li> <li>● Sector experts</li> </ul>
9. Veterinary academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Hazard: Medium</u> (Increase in disease increases society's perceived need for trained vets)</li> <li>● <u>Outrage: Low</u> (Don't see need for any changes to the courses they offer)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Refuse to recognize value of comm. sciences for veterinarians</li> <li>● Neglect funding/support for comm. courses or related</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential for notoriety as a pioneer in new area of veterinary medicine that incorporates comm.</li> <li>● Potential for additional funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Political leaders responsible for public educational funding</li> <li>● Heads of private funding groups</li> <li>● Esteemed scientists who communicate well (promoters)</li> </ul>

## Step 3: HOW? (Tasks)



***“How will you approach your stakeholders? What strategies will you employ?”***

### 3.1 Map your stakeholders by “the Five Tasks”

Map your new, more detailed list of stakeholders to the appropriate risk communication task or tasks based on the stakeholder’s risk perception.

The Five Tasks are (1) precaution advocacy, (2) crisis communication, (3) outrage management, (4) education and stakeholder engagement, and (5) public relations. Specific examples are outlined in **TABLE 2**.

Think of tasks 1, 3, 4 and 5 as peacetime strategies. Think of task 2 as your communication contingency plan for outbreaks. Remember: the stakeholder’s risk perception (hazard x outrage) determines the communication task to be employed.

It is crucial to identify which task is most appropriate for each stakeholder group. A mismatch can be detrimental. For example, the natural desire to want to reassure people during a crisis can lead to the common error of employing (3) outrage management instead of (1) precaution advocacy. In this case, veterinary authorities claim prematurely that an outbreak is under control, but the facts later reveal this not to be the case. As a result, stakeholders lose trust, and people become even less reassured and more prone to panic. Moreover, avoiding panic is not always possible, and preventing panic should not be the goal of risk communication (Sandman, 2003).

Be wary of personal bias. Instead of focusing on *your concern* about public panic, remember to focus on the *stakeholders’ outrage* to guide your actions. If the public is not concerned enough about a risk, you need to warn them via (1) precaution advocacy, not reassure them (even if your intuition contradicts this).

**Tip:** To keep your own outrage in check, ask yourself: “Where is the motivation for my communication coming from? Whose feelings/outrage am I trying to address?” If the outrage is primarily your own, then you are not applying the Five Tasks correctly.

**TABLE 2** below lists examples of communication task mapping.

### 3.2 Review priority relationships

Previously, we prioritized stakeholders by risk impact. However, after mapping them to tasks, some relationships might stand out as priorities, especially in peacetime. For example, you may have a large

contingent of activist detractors ready to protest your interventions at the slightest perceived error on your part. You may want to reach out to these activists in peacetime through tasks 3 and 5 to learn more about them. Do not wait until an outbreak happens to engage and clarify with them.

### 3.3 Be aware of communication-resistant scenarios

Open communication is the goal, but sometimes it is simply not possible. Several cognitive and physiological factors can make people less open to communication. Two of the most important are stress and fear (Slovic, 2000). If stakeholders are experiencing an excess of either, they may be less receptive to communication efforts. Realize that even if you feel an urgency to communicate, you might need to wait until your stakeholder is physiologically or cognitively available.

**TABLE 2:** Communication task mapping – hypothetical example

	Task	Objective	Basic message	Stakeholders
1	Precaution advocacy	Alerting <i>insufficiently concerned</i> people to serious risks	Danger – Watch Out!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Medium-to-large livestock owners</li> <li>● Small-scale livestock owners</li> <li>● Ministers/decision makers</li> <li>● Transporters and sellers</li> <li>● Zoo owners/managers</li> <li>● Pharmaceutical companies</li> </ul>
2	Crisis communication	Providing <i>sufficiently concerned</i> people with the info they need to make decisions and contribute	We'll get through this together and we all have a role to play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● List top priority outbreak stakeholders here</li> <li>● <i>NB: Almost all stakeholders will be "sufficiently concerned" during a crisis and should therefore be approached with crisis communication. For unconcerned stakeholders, employ precaution advocacy.</i></li> </ul>
3	Outrage management	Reassuring <i>excessively upset</i> people about small-to-medium risks	Thank you for sharing your concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consumers</li> <li>● Pet owners</li> <li>● Animal welfare advocates</li> <li>● Activist detractors</li> <li>● Radical party or other political detractors</li> </ul>
4	Education and stakeholder engagement	Providing <i>somewhat interested</i> stakeholders with useful information	Here's something interesting that can benefit you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commercial livestock owners</li> <li>● Consumers</li> <li>● Veterinary academic leaders</li> <li>● Private veterinarians</li> </ul>
5	Public relations	Promoting image of vet as service provider; <i>increasing empathy</i> ; strengthening trust	We are here to help – here is how + Tell us how to better support you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commercial livestock owners</li> <li>● Small-scale livestock owners</li> <li>● Sellers</li> <li>● Private veterinarians</li> <li>● Veterinary academic leaders</li> <li>● Pharmaceutical companies</li> <li>● Activists and other detractors</li> </ul>

### 3.4 REVIEW – Think EPICally!

Each of the Five Tasks is a guiding strategy for a certain “type” of stakeholder, as determined by their Hazard and Outrage levels. However, these tasks do not represent one-size-fits-all solutions. Some stakeholders may not fit well into one or another “box.”

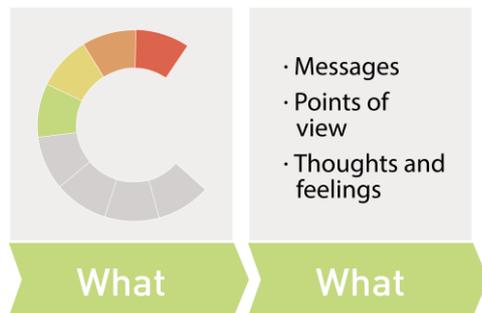
*Apply the EPIC principles to revise Task mapping:*

- Emotional: What are your stakeholders feeling, and how do these emotions affect their outrage? What emotions might you share to find common ground? What emotions might make it easier or harder to communicate (see 3.3)?
- Participatory: Are you expecting something from your stakeholders without providing anything in return?<sup>12</sup> This can be assistance or even emotional support.
- Imperfect: Could you be wrong about how you have characterized a certain stakeholder’s hazard or outrage? Are they under- or over-reacting? Are you? Be open to the possibility that your initial risk assessment might be biased or skewed.
- Continuous: What mechanism can you put in place to ensure Tasks are updated regularly?

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## Step 4: WHAT? (Messages)



***“What will you say to stakeholders? How will you start the conversation?”***

Communication may not change behaviour directly, but it can make behaviour change more (or less) possible. Messages can be the catalysts for conversations that lead to change. With the right mix of knowledge and emotion – of technical advice and stakeholder empathy – messages can produce a reaction.

### 4.1 Remember your basic messages

Start with the basic message as provided by the Five Tasks. These are:

1. Danger – Watch Out!
2. We’ll get through this together, and we all have a role to play.
3. Thank you for sharing your concerns.
4. Here’s something interesting that can benefit you.
5. We are here to help – here is how; Tell us about how to better support you.

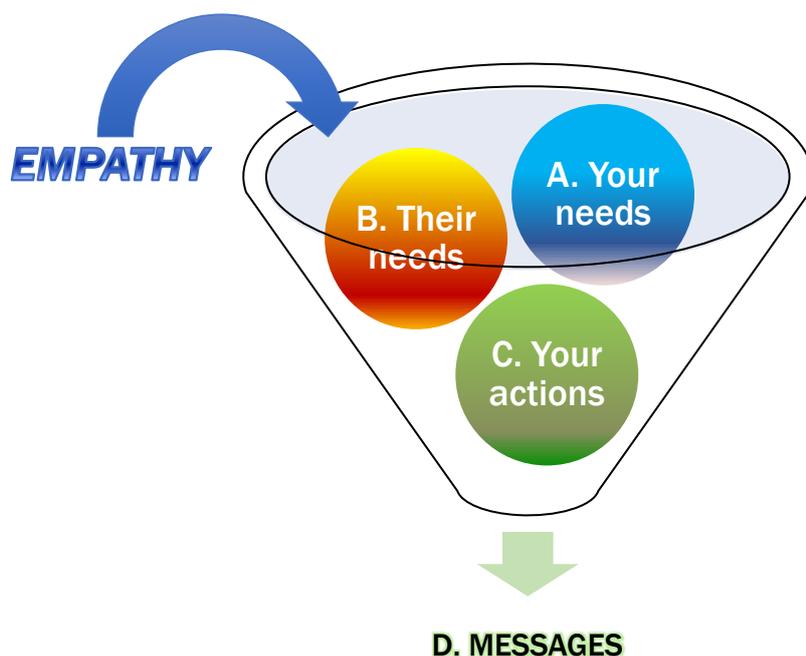
### 4.2 Create a messaging mix

Use the EPIC “messaging mix” to create and refine messages. This enables you to build on your basic messages by comparing, contrasting and combining your and stakeholders’ points of view. What you want (A) should come from your Outcomes. What they want (B) should come from KAP studies and participatory discussions. Your actions (C) should come from your risk management plan. Mixing these ingredients together creates your messages (D).

**FIGURE 4** below shows a diagram of message mixing.

Further develop these messages for each stakeholder and task by combining what you want, what they want and your planned risk management actions. An example is outlined in **TABLE 3** below.

**FIGURE 4:** EPIC messaging mix



**TABLE 3:** Empathetic “messaging mix” – hypothetical example

Task: Precaution advocacy		
Stakeholder: Commercial livestock owners		
<p><b>What you want</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Livestock owners understand impact of FMD</li> <li>● Explore campaign or emergency vaccination options</li> <li>● Implement good biosecurity</li> <li>● Report suspect cases</li> </ul>	<p><b>What they want</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure economic gains – continue selling animals</li> <li>● Provide for family now and in future</li> <li>● Protect family achievement and legacy</li> <li>● Maintain respect of community</li> <li>● Maintain current cultural habits</li> </ul>	<p><b>Your actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incentives for reporting</li> <li>● Active disease surveillance</li> <li>● Providing Instructions on improving biosecurity</li> <li>● Post vaccination monitoring</li> <li>● Border controls for illegal animal movement</li> <li>● Establishing a reporting hotline</li> </ul>
<p><b>Messages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FMD is a serious animal disease that destroys businesses if allowed to enter and spread.</li> <li>● The best ways for you to protect your family’s farm, tradition and investment are to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ employ strict biosecurity measures X, Y and Z; and</li> <li>○ vaccinate using a quality-assured vaccine.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The investment required for biosecurity <i>and vaccination</i> pales in comparison with the economic devastation that an FMD outbreak would cause. Let’s work together to keep that from happening.</li> <li>● Employing these best practices will boost your productivity and income.</li> <li>● We’re working hard to reduce the likelihood that FMD enters our country, but we can’t do it alone.</li> <li>● We’re checking for the disease everywhere we can, but you can help us do it better.</li> <li>● Concerned about FMD? We are too. That’s why we’re offering free training on how to reduce the likelihood that it infects your farm.</li> <li>● The best way you can help is by reporting suspect cases as soon as they are noticed. The sooner we find the disease, the sooner we can limit the animals it affects and stop its spread.</li> </ul>		

### 4.3 Test your messages

Using focus groups, surveys or other means, test your messages with representatives of each stakeholder group. Gather their feedback on what the message transmits to them, what it might inspire them to discuss/question and what they might do differently as a result. Discuss your Outcomes and the applicability of your messages in inspiring conversation that brings about change.

### 4.4 REVIEW – Think EPICally!

Refine and revise your original messages with feedback from discussions and message testing. You may also need to revisit your Outcomes and update them based on stakeholder discussions.

#### Apply the EPIC principles to revise messages:

- Emotional:** There may only be a few “correct” technical solutions to a disease problem, but there are no right or wrong emotional reactions. Do your messages reflect this truth? If you invalidate certain emotions with your statements (e.g. “there is no reason for panic”), then you alienate the people with those feelings. Try to recognize and appreciate each person’s right to experience their own, equally justified emotional reaction.
- Participatory:** Do you claim that everything is under control? Then why do you need stakeholder collaboration? Admitting to yourself and to others that you cannot succeed in stopping FMD without the public’s help is a key way to bringing them over to your side. Likewise, are you allowing for them to share information with you?
- Imperfect:** Have you learned something about how the virus is spreading that invalidates one of your statements? Resist the urge to be silent or to deny error. Admit and apologize for your mistake. Correct it with a new message. This is the only way to maintain trust.
- Continuous:** How often are you rewriting your messages? Who is helping you review them?

## Step 5: WHERE? (Channels and products)



### ***“By which means will you reach your stakeholders? What form will your communication take?”***

A channel is the means by which communication will reach your stakeholders. A product is any element or activity that contains your messages (see **TABLE 4** below). Both are integral in getting your messages to stakeholders.<sup>13</sup> They can also carry stakeholder reactions/feedback/thoughts/feelings back to you.

#### 5.1 Review channel preferences

Review the results of media usage and communication channel preference studies to determine each stakeholder’s preferred means of communication and message consumption. If these studies do not exist, launch a media usage survey or similar to gain an understanding of stakeholder preferences.

#### 5.2 Describe channels and products

For each stakeholder, describe the channels and products used to reach them. Ask yourself, based on their preferences: “What form of communication is going to most effectively start a conversation about risk?” If helpful you can add these preferences to your stakeholder list in **TABLE 1** above (Step 3).

<sup>13</sup> NB: Identifying channels with accuracy and designing products with efficacy takes specialized skills. Communication experts should be involved from conception to completion. However, colleagues in technical fields should still be aware of the interplay between channels, products and stakeholders in order to better contribute to the process of communication product development.

**TABLE 4** below gives examples of communication channels and products.

**TABLE 4:** Communication channel and product examples

Channel	Products
Radio	News broadcast, Q&A, self-help, public-service announcements, rural programming
Television	News broadcast, Q&A, self-help, participatory, public-service announcements
Print media	News, magazines, journals
Social media <sup>14</sup>	Facebook campaigns, Twitter posts
Interpersonal	Face-to-face and village meetings, religious festivals, community theatre, participatory video production activities
Telecoms	Telephone calls, SMS services
Visual	Signs, posters, notice boards

### 5.3 Products are the “last” step

Often when we feel the intuitive need to communicate, we quickly develop a product. Worst-case (and frequent) scenario: this product is not associated with any overarching strategy and contains all manner of messages – some conflicting, others confusing. “Producing first and asking questions later” is usually a bad idea.<sup>15</sup>

Instead, products should be designed after developing a genuine understanding of your stakeholders. Products can be costly and time consuming to develop – clarify Why, Who and What before committing resources to products. Identify your communication budget in advance, since product costs can vary wildly.

### 5.4 Combine channels, stakeholders and tasks to identify products

Referring again to the five Task matrix in **TABLE 2** above as a guide, map what you know about your stakeholders and their channel preferences with the tasks to which you have already assigned them.

<sup>14</sup> Social media is a complex and powerful channel that has fundamentally changed how the world communicates. It has made government authorities more accessible to the general public and increased the speed with which information can be disseminated. However, social media is also implicated in the spread – intentional and unintentional – of false rumours. Opinions differ on how best to guard against fake news. However, one certainty is the need for a well-funded and -staffed social media team. This can enable you to monitor the channel every day and work with social media companies to manage falsehoods and their sources.

<sup>15</sup> Most experts agree that “Embarking in media production without a proper strategy and well-defined objectives based on systematic research is a major mistake, too often done in the development context” (FAO, 2014a, p. 27).

**TABLE 5** below gives examples of products mapped to tasks.

**TABLE 5:** Products mapped to tasks – hypothetical examples

<p><b>Task: Precaution advocacy (in peacetime)</b></p> <p>Stakeholder: Commercial livestock owners</p> <p><b>Products</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Face-to-face visits to key farms to facilitate risk discussions.</li> <li>● Face-to-face visit with head of farmer associations to bring on board as opinion leader</li> <li>● Televised and radio public service announcements.</li> <li>● SMS public service announcements in localized at-risk areas to spark interest in FMD-related issues. One precautionary message each week that also offers a way for citizens to get more information.</li> <li>● Community gatherings in a town previously struck by FMD followed by one-week of participatory video production about what FMD means to that town – can later be disseminated widely.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Task: Education and stakeholder engagement (in peacetime)</b></p> <p>Stakeholder: Commercial livestock owners</p> <p><b>Products</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Televised question and answer programmes with news media asking questions of veterinary experts and allowing phone-in queries.</li> <li>● Radio participatory programmes inviting local citizens to discuss FMD with experts.</li> <li>● Community theatre productions sharing risk scenarios and various good/bad outcomes.</li> <li>● Trade fairs sponsored by local businesses but run by the veterinary authorities offering new tips and best practices to increase productivity (and biosecurity).</li> <li>● Mass media campaigns that are interesting, modern and creative and produced by outside talent (i.e. advertising agencies or similar).</li> </ul>
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### 5.5 REVIEW – Think EPICally!

Communication products can take on a life of their own. Norms and expectations are established early on, and these then dictate which products become “standard.” Flyers and posters represent popular examples. Even for scenarios in which these products are not useful (i.e. they are not creating productive conversations around FMD risks), the veterinary services continue to dedicate time and resources to updating them. Sometimes, this means better products are neglected or not considered.

Do not forget to review your messages for consistency across channels and products. For example, be sure to double check that opinion leaders are delivering messages consistent with those on your website, across social media, in press releases, etc.

*Apply the EPIC principles to revise products:*

**Emotional:** Does your product allow for feelings to be shared? Does it respectfully consider your and your stakeholders’ emotions? Can you still map it to the outrage level?

**Participatory:** Some of the best products are those produced by your stakeholders. Have you asked them if they’d like to contribute? Is there something you can produce together?

**Imperfect:** Resist the temptation to delay updating a product until “all the facts” are available. Allow products to contain errors – they can always be revised. However, the moment someone is interested in learning/communicating may only come once. Don’t miss it.

**Continuous:** How often are you rewriting your messages? Who is helping you review them?

## Step 6: WHEN? (Work plan)



### ***“When and how often will you carry out your communication?”***

Develop a Gantt chart or similar planning tool that indicates products to be developed, phases of production, a work timeline, and human and other resource requirements. Priority activities should be clearly marked, as budget constraints may require you to reduce activities after the initial plan is developed. Identify milestones to more effectively track and adjust implementation schedules.

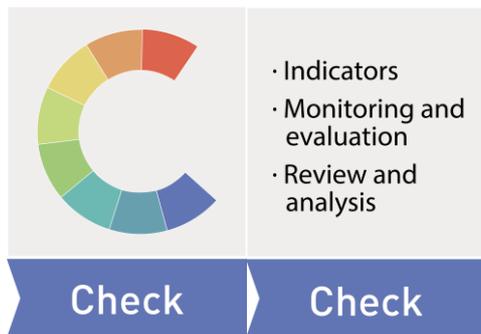
## Step 7: WHICH RESOURCES? (Budget)



### ***“How will you fund and staff your communication activities?”***

Refer to your work plan. Allocate budget lines and human resources to your activities based on the requirements identified. Proceed from highest to lowest priority. Highlight which tasks will need to be outsourced and which internal resources are available to supervise external workers. Be aware that not all communication consulting firms provide the same level of service. Ask prospective consulting companies/individuals for a risk communication business case as a part of the tendering process.

## Step 8: HOW EFFECTIVE? (Monitoring and evaluation)



***“How will you measure communication impact and update your plan accordingly?”***

8.1 Develop indicators

The plan needs indicators to know to what extent it is or is not making Outcomes a reality.<sup>16</sup> “These indicators can be quantitative, such as the number of social media mentions, or subjective, such as the feedback from field discussions. Each Outcome should have several indicators. The below are only examples:

- Number of telephone calls into a radio/TV discussion programme
- Statistical survey of awareness/knowledge/perception compared to baseline
- Percentage of increase in requests for FMD information, biosecurity instruction, etc.
- Number of repeat hotline calls with same, unresolved issues
- Statistical feedback from clients (i.e. value chain actors)
- Speed of hotline referral to relevant staff
- Percentage increase in vaccine sales
- Percentage increase in biosecurity equipment sales

8.2 Describe how indicators will be captured

Identify the process by which each indicator will be gathered over time (e.g. periodic surveys, web analytics, and social media monitoring).

8.3 Describe your revision protocol

Establish a cyclical timeframe with which you will review progress against indicators and stakeholder feedback. Define deadlines for revisions and decide which supervisor(s) will be accountable.

Conclusion

<sup>16</sup> Ensure metrics are simple, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (i.e. SMART). (FAO, 2014b, p. 89).

Risk communication is a challenge for everyone. However, with the use of this guide and the application of EPIC principles, it is possible for veterinary risk managers and communication experts to more effectively engage with audiences to create i) more productive dialogue around animal health risks, and ii) more extensive consensus on risk management actions to be taken.

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Other resources on FMD communication can be found in the [EuFMD Knowledge Bank](#).

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