

Episode Title: Want to Make a Podcast? Lessons Learned from the FarmSafe Hosts

Summary: Have you ever considered podcasting? The current and former FarmSafe hosts from seasons 1-4 are back to chat about what they learned from making the FarmSafe Podcast. They provide tips for interviewing, including fighting off nerves and creating compelling stories. How did we come up with an original goal of 15-minute episodes? What were the hurdles of starting a agricultural safety and health podcast? All will be answered from our hosts in this season 4 finale.

Expert: Renee Anthony, Libby Ritchie, Anna Proctor, Matison Bentley

Transcript

E Ritchie

Welcome to the *FarmSafe* Podcast brought to you by the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health. In the blink of an eye, an injury can change your life and your farm forever. During each episode, we share first-hand stories and real-life tips for making safer and healthier decisions while on the farm.

R Anthony

Kate, welcome back to Farm Safe. Many of our listeners have heard your voice in season one, but what they may not know is that Kate was instrumental in developing the podcast. We started planning it in the dark days of 2020. And with Kate's leadership, we rolled out the first episode in August of 2021, bringing on board the many voices of researchers and scientists working on Ag safety and health around the region. Kate, can you tell us a little bit about what the process was like?

K Crawford

Yeah, thanks Renee. It was actually a lot of fun. I learned a lot from it and it was, like you said, back in 2020. And the center, you were thinking about how do we share resources and how do we reach this audience and how do we kind of tell people what we're working on? And I think you all had been talking about a podcast for a while.

K Crawford

We knew they were popular and listening to the radio and podcasts while you're working was good. So, it seemed like a great idea and it was kind fun to dive in. I will say there was a lot of great resources online because there's a lot of podcasts out there. Surprisingly, a lot of resources to help you get started. But there were things we weren't thinking about, recommendations about logos and title and what music do you use?

Which was one of the most fun parts was getting the music together for it. We also did a lot of work talking about, you know, format made sense and how often we knew we liked sharing stories. One of the things that COVID restricted us from doing was going out to a lot of farm shows and working with a lot of partners and hearing from people. So, finding a way to incorporate those voices into things was really important. So, we wanted to make sure we were still able to do that. So, we kind of just went through all of that and came up with an idea and just figured it out. Yeah. So, if somebody wants to start a podcast, think, you know, see what's out there, see what works. I mean, we kind of settled on the kind of settled on the 15 minutes lot based on some things that you've listened to.

R Anthony

How did how did we come up with that 15 minutes? Remember?

K Crawford

I know we looked at a lot of podcasts that were already out there. We looked at recommendations, especially for new podcasts. What's something that's long enough to deliver some impact, but not too long that, you know, people aren't going to run away, especially when they're trying something out. Um, and that seemed to be kind of a sweet spot. And also, again, like I said, we kind of looked at some other similar ones out there and tried to gauge what they were doing and whatnot.

R Anthony

Yeah. We didn't really see any Ag, Safety and Health kind of podcast out there. There were some Ag, definitely, and some, a few Safety and Health ones, but nothing that brought the two worlds together. So, thanks for kicking it off. Yeah. The first season, you know, we had 23 episodes. We covered a lot of topics. For those of you that haven't listened to the back catalog, we started with ATVs. So, we had an interview and cut that into several episodes. And then we decided we needed some new topics. So, we had sleep falls and cold weather, ammonia and manure gases. How did you approach topics and speakers that first year?

K Crawford

Yeah, that's a great question. It's cool to hear about all the topics. I remember when, and it was again, part of our planning phase. We look at kind of our calendar of events. So, you know, when were there particular times where we definitely wanted to share certain resources? When do we know what types of activities are going to be doing in the field? Making sure we were kind of planning around those things. So, they came at a time when they would be helpful and meaningful. We also looked at what resources we had coming out to share to see if that would factor into the schedule. And certainly in the beginning too, again, when we were kind of still coming out of lockdown, still restricted on what we did, we were also looking at recordings that we had done in interviews we had done with people at past farm shows to see what kind of topics they were talking about and see if there was things that we wanted to turn into something. So, kind of a few ways that we went about it.

R Anthony

In your season, was there any episode that you remember that maybe your favorite episode either to record or pull together or to share with others?

K Crawford

Gosh, the first episode is always going to be near and dear to my heart, right? Cause that was the first time we were pulling everything together. That was also a lot of fun. Cause for that one, I talked to a whole bunch of different people. So, we were interviewing farmers. know Ralph had incredible stories about growing up on the farm and working on the farm. And I talked to a few people that were talking about experiences. It also gave me a chance to talk to a lot of our researchers and partners who were doing work to kind of get their voices and some of the things they were in.

The manure gas episode stands out in my mind and ammonia, talking to the emergency responders, I think those stories definitely stick out. And in my mind, they had, some pretty incredible and, and devastating stories at times, but I think really important, interviews to have. So, I do remember those certainly. Yeah.

R Anthony

Great. Well, I'm not sure if you know this or not, but we keep track of what people are listening to and people are still listening to episodes in season one. A few of your episodes in season one still remain top downloads across all seasons. Cold weather training tips and the sleep episodes are the number one and two episodes of our catalog. So well done.

The back pain and whole-body vibration episode, which is interviews you did with some colleagues here at the Great Plains Center, is currently ranked at number four in our library. How'd you come up with these ideas for some of these episodes, especially the sleep and cold weather training?

K Crawford

That's awesome to hear. The cold weather training one, that was the one with Dr. Rovai, right? So, the veterinarian in South Dakota. I was super excited about that episode. That was kind of like a cold call because I didn't know her, but for that one, I had actually found this incredible resource she had made. It was these training tips for dairy workers. She had English and Spanish versions, and they were just really interesting to see because there were things in those training materials that you don't see kind of in standard training. And so, it was really wanted to kind of have the conversation about why those things were important. The sleep one was something that came up, I think one of our we were working with our partners at another ag center. And they had mentioned they were working on these projects, looking at sleep. And we know that that's something that everybody's kind of interested in that affects everyone. That was just such a great topic. So, when we heard that they were doing some work on that, that was a just like in kind of an easy ask to be like we'd love to learn more about that and have you talk about it.

R Anthony

Yeah, when we're looking at the data, we keep looking at the cold weather training tips. like, is that real? People still listening to it. So, it's like every day somebody's listening to it. So, I think our partners are, sharing this somehow that we don't know about. So, it's still being useful, although maybe not today at, you know, hot temperatures.

Thanks, Kate, for stopping by today and reliving some of these memories. And thank you for kicking off the Farm Safe podcast and making such great episodes that continue to resonate with our listeners today.

R Anthony

Let's jump to the voices of our season two. So Anna and Matison, as we record this, I know that you are both wrapping up your paperwork and your studies here at the University of Iowa College of Public Health, but I'm going to ask you to go in the way back machine and think back to what it was like in the fall of 2022 and spring summer of 2023 when you guys were both working on the podcast.

Since I know you had heavy workloads and had classes as well as research, I do appreciate you guys dividing your time and conquering the podcast and having great discussions again on a variety of topics relevant to farming, health and safety. Matison, you kicked off the season with Women in Ag series. Why did you want to focus on these topics?

M Howard

Well, first off, Renee, it's great to be back. Season two feels like a lifetime ago, but I've learned a lot, but I think one thing that really remains is my kind of passion for women in agriculture. I remember reading a statistic that was from the USDA, I believe that was talking about how about 36 % of the workforce in ag are actually women and they're women producers. And I think that really just stood out in my mind. Thinking about the different dynamics that that might affect each person in their, in their work life, but specifically more if you're a woman.

I really try to hone in on what that could look like, no matter if you're a producer or if you're in a supporting role, such as, you know, the seed salesman's. It was just a really good point to kind of dig in a little bit further to see what's out there and how we as researchers and almost researchers from the University of Iowa, I should say, can really support those populations to make their roles successful and safe and healthy.

R Anthony

Great. Well, I do want to let you know, Madison, that your first episode in this series, the Women in Agriculture and Safety Issues, is our third most frequently listened to episode. So, well done on that one. That's really exciting to hear. Anna, you completed a lot of episodes in the spring and summer for your season. The zoonotic disease episode with Dr. Klumb in Minnesota is another top five episode. And it had a huge life on social media. So, we promote things when we have new episodes drop, we promote quite heavily in Facebook. And then that Facebook like really lit off and took off around the country. So that was exciting times. Are there any other episodes that you're really proud of that you want to dial our listeners in to hear about?

A Proctor

One of my favorite episodes that I recorded was the Leslie Kelly episode talking about mental health. She was so transparent about her journey with postpartum depression and her husband's experience with anxiety. And she definitely recognized that mental health is something that is stigmatized in society, but the stigma may be a bit deeper in agricultural communities. I had a mentor in high school tell me that in order to get somebody to bleed, you yourself have to hemorrhage. And I think her just being so open and sharing her journey and how it didn't just affect her and her family, but it also impacted their livelihood on the farm. I hope that it makes other people in agriculture feel comfortable enough to realize that it's okay to reach out for help. And I think that's the big takeaway from that episode. So that was definitely one of my favorites.

R Anthony

You're right. It's a great episode. For those of you that haven't listened to it, it's a season two, episode seven, *What's Your Normal?* And we promoted that pretty extensively in the 2024 National Farm Safety and Health Week as well. And so, we know that we continue

to reach people with that fantastic episode. So, Madison and Anna, did you work out scheduling podcasts during your crazy year of fame and glory for the Farm Safe podcast?

A Proctor

Madison, you want to take that one away.

M Howard

Sure. I felt like Anna and I worked well as a team. And we kind of just took what we could and ran with it. I think reaching out to people was kind of a big thing at that point because we were kind of running behind on schedule a little bit, at least from what we usually like to see with the podcast. So, I think us just kind of tag teaming it and just picking up where we could was really helpful to get those episodes out.

R Anthony

Yeah, it's a great way to approach it because you've got, you know, if other people are thinking of a podcast, right, mix it up, keep voices fresh.

A Proctor

I completely agree. I think working as a team really was our saving grace for that semester. I think we were both in the thick of it with school and research, but we're both really excited about the podcast. So being able to split the responsibilities made it manageable.

R Anthony

Thank you guys for such a great season two. So, let's switch gears and jump into season three. So, Libby you've been now with us for two seasons so thanks for coming back after season three and trying some new things for season four. When you took over you and I had a conversation about playing with the format and how can we evolve the episode structure. So, we played a little bit of that in season three. Our listeners will now hear you kind of wrap up with some summary tips that were given by our guests. You often close out each episode with a specific ask for the listener, hey, can you do this? And you know, now that you've heard about this hazard. When episodes contain a lot of information, find these wrap-ups really helpful. Why did you come up with this approach? How did you think about doing it this way?

E Ritchie

Yeah, I think some of our interviews were longer interviews and it was hard to cut anything because everything in there was so good. So, they ran a little bit longer. And so, I think breaking down each episode and figuring out really what the key takeaway is, like what do we want people to do with the information that we provided in the episode? And so sometimes those episode asks were kind of tailored to our farming audience. But then we also have a lot of extension people and ag educators who might be listening. And then it's kind of like tailoring the episode asked to encompass, you know, a whole broad audience of people and not just our farmers.

R Anthony

Yeah. And in doing that, I think you came up with some new resources that actually didn't exist before you had the interview. How did you approach those?

E Ritchie

I have that creativity in me. I really like developing resources, especially graphic resources. A lot of times I would hear a lot of good tips and I would think to myself, okay, this is a lot of good information, but how are people going to remember all of it? And are they really going to go back and listen to an episode when they're in severe weather or something, and they want to remember, okay, what were those things that they told me to do in the farm safe podcast episode? And so, I wanted to create for some of these things a resource that they could have on hand that just hits those key points of tips and guidance that were provided in the episode.

R Anthony

Well, I want to sincerely thank you for taking the time for doing that. For those of you that are listening to this on Spotify or on Apple or some other platform, if you go to our website, Great Plains Center's website and find the Farm Safe podcast, each episode has a bunch of resources. So, when we say check out the resources, they're on our website. So, go see all the hard work that Libby has done to really come up with some interactive things that are designed to post on the farm, right? In your machine shed, in your equipment, where hazards occur to help you be ready with the information that you may remember from the podcast, but may not remember all the details at the point in time that you need it.

R Anthony

So, while we don't have the final episode download counts for you yet, because we're still in the middle of season four, we do want to report that the Got Ticks episode, which is very late in season three, was on its way to becoming another top episode. The pictures gross me out that we use online. What was your favorite episode to record in the series? Maybe more than one. I won't hold you to just one.

E Ritchie

I don't think I do have just one. Honestly, I was really proud of the season four episodes just because I got a little bit more comfortable with doing the podcast. For me, I really wanted to kind of dive into some topics that were a little bit outside of the typical health and safety conversations. And so, one of our episodes was about succession planning and how that impacts just kind of mental health and stress of the kind of owner generation and how that transfers to an operator generation. I also really enjoyed our mini series, our three-part series on childcare access. And again, that link to child safety on the farm. And it even pulls in aspects of health insurance and you know how that plays into childcare access and then child safety. And then another two that I really like are the farm kid paradox, which is how that works when you're growing up on a farm. Then with the same expert guests of that episode, we did the one on reporting agricultural incidents. So, how should they tailor their messages.

R Anthony

Right, that whole accident versus incident issue. Words are powerful. I think having experts really explain that issue of, it's an accident, which makes people think there's no way to prevent an accident. But there is a way to prevent an incident. And we know a tractor overturn, we can prevent that. So, let's call it what it is. And it's an overturn or a crash or whatever it is.

E Ritchie

Yeah. And I think it was important to highlight the media's role in that.

R Anthony

Yeah, it's kind of looking at this from multiple aspects all again to help people understand what risks farmers face and what prevention measures can be adopted. Because everything that we talked about in the podcast is what best practices out there to prevent an injury or an illness that we know is happening on the farm or with our farm families. So, thank you Libby for sticking through both seasons three and four for us. I appreciate it.

So, what our listeners might not know is I have you all in the same Zoom room together for this episode. So, I do want to change gears and have you guys all talk about the experience of putting together episodes for the Farm Safe podcast with an eye for sharing what the experience was like for someone who may be thinking about doing something similar. I know getting started was nerve wracking for each one of you, right? Talking to a total stranger about something they're expert in and you're just learning about. Can you guys describe for our listeners how you approached the early episodes that you were involved in and what you did to overcome that nervousness? You all had such interesting conversations. This could help others get over that fear and start telling stories better about how to promote farm safety.

M Howard

I can kick things off with this one. I think just having a general curiosity was really helpful. So, I didn't necessarily go into the interviews having set questions all the time, but just really listening to what the person was saying. And like you said, they're an expert, so they know it better than anyone else. So just listening into what they had to say and kind of going from there to see what questions can arise and just having that natural conversation.

A Proctor

That's a great point, Matison. I also think it's a great way to kind of meet people and start talking to people is by asking them to tell you a story about something they care about and something that they're really interested in. And it actually becomes very easy to have that conversation. And like Matison said, if you're curious on your end and you want to hear more, it's something that they're really passionate about sharing and explaining. Those conversations are much easier than perhaps you anticipate they could be.

K Crawford

Something that I found was pretty effective for me was before having the interview, there was usually a little bit of communication, usually through email, before we actually sat down to record. And so, we knew a little bit about each other going into it, but I found that rapport building before we actually started recording is so important. And I think it makes both parties feel a little bit more comfortable, so then that way you're not talking to a total stranger. So really just kind of basic chit chat before you actually jump into the interview. I found it was really helpful, and it really calmed my nerves, especially in the beginning when I was still little overwhelmed with the whole process.

E Ritchie

Yeah, I think same thing that everyone else said. My first guest was someone who is extremely easy to talk to. That helped my nervousness for sure. And, I know there are pros to doing live podcasts, but definitely when you let them know this will be edited so don't feel like you have to like stick to a script and get nervous if you mess up. That was always helpful, not only for them, but for me.

R Anthony

Great. As you work through your seasons, what did you learn about the community of farmers and agricultural health and safety professionals that you maybe didn't know before stepping into this field?

K Crawford

How diverse the field actually is. I mean, I've learned through classes and just from experience that agriculture is not just grandpa on a tractor in the field, but being able to actually connect with people and talk to people. I think it just made me realize how diverse the field actually is. It's rural veterinarians and it's infectious disease specialists and it's forestry workers and safety specialists. And so, it was just, it was really cool being able to actually visualize the diversity in the field.

R Anthony

All right, if we had all the time and money in the world to do more FarmSafe podcasts, what's missing? What would you want to interview somebody about?

M Howard

You know, I think the emergency preparedness episode is really well thought out and really well planned and it gives a really good high-level interview. But I personally would like to see a little bit more specific emergencies, whether it be drought or hurricane or just different types of natural disasters, agrotourism. Some just more specifics to kind of tailor it to each emergency that you might see or encounter.

A Proctor

I think it's maybe some more of the mental health episodes. think those have been great. And I feel like recently there's a lot of topics where people are kind of also talking about that mental health element. So exactly what Madison just said about these different natural disasters and emergency preparedness. And then Libby was talking about succession planning. It's all these things that we're talking about also have these kind of mental health elements to them as well as the physical health and safety.

K Crawford

Yeah, and even with mental health, everybody's like, what's the solution? What do we do? But I think it's just having the story be told and having people say, yeah, I'm stuck or this stresses me out. I'm losing sleep. And for people to say, oh, yeah, me too. I think I think

this is a nice format for people to feel comfortable and safe doing that. There is another podcast, *TransFarmation*, which our center had supported in early days, four episodes, and they've gotten a bunch of funding and the person that's the main voice of that is a radio personality and he was shocked with the amount of people that called in and wanted to talk about it. So, there are some places to go, but yeah, it's definitely something to get people to talk to kind of reduce stigma and let everybody know that they're okay. Everybody's going through this together.

R Anthony

Any other topics?

E Ritchie

I would just second what Madison said about emergency preparedness. I kind of had this whole plan of wanting to do a more in-depth like series of emergency preparedness and it's difficult because there's you know the side of it where you know if there's you know an explosion or you know that type of emergency preparedness in response to things like that. And then there's more of the severe weather aspect of emergency preparedness and response. I would have loved to be able to go into more detail about that because I think there's a lot that goes in it, goes into the preparedness part of it. And it depends on every single weather event. It's, it's going to be different. So.

R Anthony

Well, maybe once Madison graduates, gets her PhD with all this emergency preparedness stuff, we'll circle back. Maybe season five. All right. I'm going to ask you each for one recommendation from each of you that you would give to others who are thinking about pulling a podcast together of their own. What one piece of recommendation would you give to somebody?

A Proctor

I would say invest in a good microphone. Even a couple of the episodes we did at the Farm Progress Show or these bigger farm shows that were throughout the Midwest, felt like just having a quality microphone kind of saved us with the wind being outside or if there's a lot of people around, just the background noise. So, I definitely think that made it easier on our end when we went back to kind of edit and play around with the sound volumes and that kind of thing. But outside of that, I would really just say go for it. I felt like I made a lot of good connections that otherwise probably wouldn't have. And I definitely think that it's something that everyone should do at least once in their life. Just get on there and just talk about it.

K Crawford

And I would recommend for folks starting out to look at what podcasts are already out there, you know, if there's anything similar or think about how they want their podcast to kind of stand out and look there like I said earlier, there's a lot of resources online from creators who can kind of give advice on how to navigate that. But think about what makes your podcast stand out and what can you do to make sure people want to listen to it.

M Howard

My recommendation would be if you are doing a podcast with specific targeted episodes on certain topics to do your research ahead of time. You definitely don't need to be an expert going into it, but it's good to at least have a foundation of understanding about the topic.

E Ritchie

Okay, my recommendation would be to give a lot of thought about questions that you're going to ask experts. Because starting out, I feel like my questions were pretty basic, just generalized questions. And as I continue to the podcast more and more, my questions got a lot more interesting, and we're able to kind of lead the conversation into a specific area that it probably wouldn't have gotten to. And yeah, I think the questions that you're asking have a big impact on how the episode is gonna turn out.

R Anthony

Yeah, that's great. But give yourself some slack when you're starting out, right? You're doing what you can and the more you do it, the better you get and the better your questions are. Same with everything we do in life. So, you guys have done a fantastic job leading us through four seasons of the Farm Safe podcast and I cannot thank each of you enough. You've been a wonderful team of podcast hosts, Kate, Madison, Anna and Libby. I do want to thank you for your time, your energy and your interest in storytelling.

Each of you has helped make the *FarmSafe* podcast a fun and useful tool to share best practices with our audience. And they will outlast your time here at the University of Iowa. As we close our season four of the, the Farm Safe podcast, I also want to thank all of our guest experts and farmers who took the time to share their stories with all of you and with all of us so that we can help make the farm safer and healthier place to both work and live. There are too many to name, but their voices are still telling their stories in our archives. So, we do encourage our listeners to take a dip back in and listen to them all.

K Crawford

Listen in on the *FarmSafe* podcast to join in on the conversation about keeping safe on the farm. We want to hear from you.

A Proctor

Share your stories about health and safety issues on the farm, about injuries that made you change the way you work, or about the ways you keep yourself and others safe on the farm.

M Howard

Also, let us know if there's questions you have or topics that you want to hear about on the air. You can visit our website, gpcah.org, or email us.

E Ritchie

Original music for the *FarmSafe* podcast was written and performed by Ben Schmidt.

R Anthony

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Photo

