

# Leveraging social media for small ruminant practices

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## Abstract

Fortunately or unfortunately, having a presence on Facebook, Instagram, Google, and other social media outlets has become the most common way for clients to discover their local veterinarian. Because of this, it is important to be able to be able to engage the customer through creating online business profiles on social media, posting on social media outlets, curating positive reviews, and responding to positive and negative reviews.

**Key words:** social media, reviews, small ruminants

## Obtaining a Presence

The best way to start engaging existing and new customers is to either start, or expand on your online presence. This includes setting up and managing 3 main sites: Google my Business (Google), Facebook, and Instagram. Setting up these sites allows customers to easily find your business, information about your business (services offered, email, website information, physical address, etc.) and connect through email, phone, your website, or through direct messaging through Instagram or Facebook. It is important to have an interesting and engaging online presence on these sites (and your personal website) because this will be the potential customer's first impression.

## Engagement

After you have created an online presence through Google, Facebook, Instagram and other outlets, you can begin to increase your searchability by soliciting reviews, likes, follows, and posting media for your online followers to engage with. When creating and posting media (photos of your staff, patients, etc.) it is best to use hashtags and also to post photos that are well composed with an interesting and engaging subject. Customers like to see photos of people they recognize doing things! Provide a short summary of what is happen-

ing. People don't like poorly lit, blurry, uninteresting photos. Hashtags allow you to engage customers that have interests in veterinary medicine, or that are geographically local (you can hashtag your current town) by allowing customers to search for you through hashtags. You can also invite people to "like" your page on Facebook, which will put your postings on their Facebook feed as they scroll through, increasing their engagement and potentially showing services you offer that may lead to an increase in customers.

## Reviews

After you have obtained social media outlets where current and potential customers can find you, you can begin to solicit reviews. You have 2 options. One is that after a client visit has ended, you can always send an email soliciting a review, or two, only send emails to visits that felt like they went well. Include a phrase such as, "We are so glad that you are part of the \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital Family! We would appreciate your review by clicking 1 of the sites below. Thank you! (LINK TO GOOGLE OR FACEBOOK). If we did not meet your expectations, please email or call us directly at \_\_\_\_\_)." By asking clients to post a review, and providing them with an easily clickable link, your chances of getting positive reviews increases substantially. Also, by including a direct contact, you are lowering your chances of getting a negative review if clients contact you in order to discuss their bad experience. A business owner or manager should begin to respond to all reviews. Responding to good reviews increases your SEO (search engine optimization) by including keywords such as, "we are glad you had a good experience with your goat", or "we love caring for large animals". Responding to bad reviews allows you to show that you genuinely care, and that you may be able to find a resolution by establishing a direct connection with that client, which may encourage that client to remove the bad review by helping find them a solution (money back, changing protocols, listening to their side of the story).