

2012 LPC Ethics Survey
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Based on the results of this study, a “typical” LPC member is ...

1. A 44-year-old female who has earned a bachelor’s degree in a communications discipline, has worked in the livestock publications industry for about 16 years, and has served in her current position for nearly 10 years.
2. Responsible for writing, editing, and photography.
3. Employed for an organization that produces a print publication, maintains a website, and participates in “new media.”

Ethical responsibility influences publication credibility. Although LPC members at least somewhat agree LPC has a clear code of ethics and standards of performance, nearly a quarter of respondents aren’t sure about either.

LPC members perceive the following about livestock publications:

1. An ethically responsible publication is more credible with the public.
2. Management should act ethically responsible regardless of how those actions affect profit.
3. Personal opinions should be labeled as such.
4. Publishing editorial content based on the wishes and benefits of advertisers should be avoided.
5. Potential impacts on privacy and rights of all persons should be considered before publishing material.
6. Responses from those involved with harmful material reported should be published to resolve the issue.
7. Livestock publication professionals should work the content accuracy and promptly correct errors.
8. Gifts and favors can compromise the credibility of the publication.
9. Publication professionals should accurately represent the circulation to advertisers, agents and representatives.
10. Organizational secrecy should not hide organizational misconduct.
11. Publication professionals follow personal conscience before organizational obedience and act as the conscience of the publication.
12. Individuals do not necessarily have separate ethical standards in their private and business affairs.

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Livestock publications collectively use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Blogs and Flickr at least once per day. Social media content should follow the same ethical standards as printed editorial content.

LPC members perceive the following about new media:

1. Content sponsored by advertisers posted through new media channels should be labeled as such.
2. New media content should be objective.
3. Professional should have a written code of ethics for new media should be available.

Responsible professionals follow personal ethics concerning digital manipulation. Images used for editorial purposes have different manipulation standards than images used in advertisements. They do not agree on the acceptability on digitally altering photos using various techniques. Results from the study indicate ...

1. Dodging, burning, color enhancement and blemish removal is acceptable for images used for editorial and advertisement purposes.
2. Adding an object or people to an editorial photo is unacceptable, while adding an object or people to an advertising photo is somewhat acceptable.
3. Removing objects or people from advertising images is acceptable; however, professionals do not agree on the acceptability of removing objects or people from editorial images.
4. Blending photos for advertisements is acceptable; however, the acceptability of using this technique in editorial photos is undetermined.
5. Extensive cropping and flipping are more acceptable in advertisement photos than in editorial photos.

In relation to other digital photo manipulation issues, LPC members ...

1. Somewhat agree altered photos should be identified as photo illustrations; however, one-fifth of responses had no opinion.
2. Agree using photo alternations to change the meaning of a photo is unacceptable.
3. The industry should have set standards and a written code of ethics for digital images manipulation/alteration.
4. Somewhat agree images for advertisements should not be altered freely.

Digital manipulation has not necessarily have caused a shift in the credibility of a publication.

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Based on these conclusions, the researchers recommend the following:

1. LPC should revise its code of ethics to include guidelines on publishing content through new media and digital photo manipulation.
2. LPC should increase efforts to promote its code of ethics with members.
3. Once LPC has revised its code of ethics, member publications and associations should develop or update their respective codes of ethics for their employees to provide consistency across the livestock publications industry.