



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

## Social Media – Tips and Tricks for Engaging Community

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### Introduction

Social media is an excellent tool to help promote your events and programs and share what your Virginia Cooperative Extension unit does with your local community.

### Set Up Your Unit Profile

Before launching your VCE social media presence, please ensure you recruit another office staff member to maintain access to the account. Additionally, add the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences/Virginia Cooperative Extension social media manager to the account.

Every VCE and 4-H social media page should always have at least two office staff members and one representative from the central CALS team with access, ensuring you are never locked out of your page.

**Facebook:** Create a business page by going to [facebook.com/business](https://facebook.com/business). Fill in all the details, including the profile picture (VCE logo), cover photo (a beautiful image of your county), and unit contact information.

**Pro tip:** If you place the non-discrimination statement from document [VCE-1192](#) within the about/details section, then you do not have to include the non-discrimination statement on your social media posts. Please refer to the main Virginia Cooperative Extension Facebook page to reference and to copy and paste.

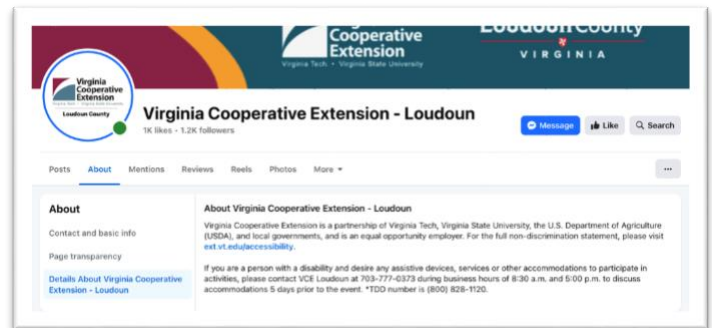


Figure 1. Applying the non-discrimination statement to a Facebook account. [View the current example on Facebook.](#)

Your page name should be consistent with other Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia 4-H pages.

VCE: Virginia Cooperative Extension - [County/City Unit Name]

- Ex. Virginia Cooperative Extension - Goochland County
- Ex. Virginia Cooperative Extension - Chesapeake

VA 4-H: [County/City Unit Name], VA 4-H

- Ex. Rockingham County, VA 4-H
- Ex. Virginia Beach 4-H

**Instagram:** Only create an Instagram account if you plan to be active daily. This account can be linked to your Facebook business account. Complete your profile with a bio, profile picture, and website link.

## Post Frequency

Aim for a few posts each week to keep your audience engaged. Optionally, you can use Meta Business Suite to schedule posts in advance. This tool lets you share content to both Instagram and Facebook and allows you to schedule multiple posts at once, so you can ensure your posts are coming out at a steady pace.



Figure 2. Example of posting an event or training on Facebook with limited information on the graphic and several links in the caption

**Pro tip:** All posts should include a visual element, like a photo, video, or graphic. Avoid text-only posts as they do not get prioritized in the algorithm.

## Utilize Facebook Events

Any upcoming events, workshops, or other opportunities to bring in an in-person or Zoom audience should be promoted through Facebook Events.

Use an eye-catching photo or properly formatted graphic as the event header image.

In the details section, include the date, time, location, and relevant details, as well as information for guests who may require accommodation.

If your event requires registration, include the link in the “tickets” section, as well as in the event description itself. If phone or email signups are an option, include the proper contact details in the description.

Add co-hosts to your event if you are partnering with another VCE or 4-H club or office, or a local organization like a library, government office, business, or school. This helps the event be more visible across a wider audience. You can also add the state-level Virginia Cooperative Extension or Virginia 4-H pages as co-hosts.

Set your event Communications Settings to “show guest list” and “posts must be approved by a host.” This helps prevent spam posts in the event feed and allows your followers to see if their friends or connections are attending.

Facebook promotes events based on follower engagement, so the more people who mark themselves as “interested” or “going,” the more widely the event will be shown across their networks.

## Use Engaging Content

Share updates about your organization, upcoming events, and success stories that pertain to your audience.

Make sure to add the location (city, county, park, or building) to your post. This will be shared within that area.

Ensure that graphics and images are formatted so they show up nicely on your followers’ feeds. Instagram posts should be vertical (1080 x 1350 pixels) instead of square or horizontal, so they are cropped correctly on your grid. Facebook images have more leeway with the pixel size but should still be high-quality photos.

Turning a PDF event flyer into an image file and posting it is not visually appealing to your followers. Instead, use an eye-catching photo or create a simple graphic with just the key elements of the flyer

information (like the title, date, etc.), and put the rest of the details in the post caption.

**Pro tip:** Adding emojis to your post to highlight important sections can boost algorithm prioritization and can increase engagement upwards of 28% – 57% on Facebook and Instagram. Try using an emoji as a bullet in an announcement, like a flower for a Master Gardener post or a vegetable for an ANR program.

## Event Photos

Make sure to take photographs that represent the totality of the event, as multiple photographs in a post will get more engagement. Select the best first 4 or 5 photos for your Facebook post to draw the viewer in. View examples in [Facebook Layout Examples](#).

A varied photo approach works well, something up close, something far away, maybe something colorful. Add descriptions to the individual photos as to what the viewer is looking at; you can also add a related VCE publication link in the description.

**Pro tip:** Make sure to tag partners and others who were part of your programming day. Please note, you must be following an account to tag that account.

## Hashtags

Hashtags are primarily used on Instagram and can be best utilized to find new followers or as a tool for tracking specific content performance.

While social media users still search for content they're interested in by using hashtags, it is not the primary way they will find your content, so you do not need to use a large number of hashtags on your posts.

You can find location-specific hashtags to help local audiences find your content. (Ex. #culpepercounty, #culpeperdowntown) Social media algorithms naturally use keywords to prioritize content rather than relying solely on hashtags. Use hashtags that are more specific than general.

When planning an event, create a sign with an Instagram or Facebook logo and a unique hashtag,

so your attendees can easily upload and share their content with you.

## Follow Partner Pages

Expand your following and reach by following local pages, especially those you partner with for events and programming.

Follow your county government pages, local businesses, community organizations, schools, and other pages that may have an interest in following you back. You can comb through their followers as well to look for other pages you might interact with.

## Interact with Your Audience

Running a successful social media page involves more than just sharing engaging content. Building a sense of community is essential, and interacting with your followers is key to achieving this.

Like and reply to comments on your posts and events, especially if they are asking questions or need guidance. You should always respond to direct messages promptly.

You can also use your VCE or 4-H page to like, comment on, and share posts from other relevant community pages and partners. This helps generate engagement on both of your pages. Ensure that shared posts are from reputable sources and are directly relevant to your audience.

## Track Your Performance

Check Facebook Insights and Instagram Analytics to see how your posts are doing. You can also use Meta Business Suite to review performance metrics.

Look at metrics like likes, comments, shares, reach, and follower growth.

If you notice a particular kind of content is doing well, or some posts aren't getting any engagement at all, factor that in to how you plan your posts going forward. It's okay to experiment and have fun with your ideas for generating growth!

# Accessibility

Accessibility is a key part of managing your social media presence. As a page representing Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia 4-H, you are mandated to have accessible content, and it makes your page usable for all people who come across it.

**Alternative (Alt) Text:** In Meta Business Suite and natively on Facebook and Instagram, you can add alt text to photos. Alt text is what a screen reader uses to describe the photo to anyone with visual impairments, and should be a short, accurate description of the image. If there is text on the graphic, it should all be included in the alt text, along with colors and visual elements, descriptions of what is in a photo, and anything else in the image that you want your followers to understand.

**Non-Discrimination Statement:** On Facebook, the non-discrimination statement should be included in your page's "about" information. For Instagram, include a link to your Extension website, which has your non-discrimination statement in your bio.

**Video Captions:** All videos with audio need to have captions with them so they can still be understood by those with hearing impairments and followers watching with sound turned off.

**Hashtags:** Hashtags should be written in camel case, meaning capitalizing letters between words.

- Correct Ex. #BuildingCommunity
- Incorrect Ex. #buildingcommunity
- Incorrect Ex. #BUILDINGCOMMUNITY

**Emojis:** Emojis are read as a string of seemingly random characters by screen readers. For this reason, they should not be used in mid-sentence or in place of letters. Emojis should be used sparingly and only at the beginning or end of a paragraph.

**Image Contrast:** When sharing a graphic on your feeds, ensure that you're using high-contrast text colors for better legibility. You should use dark text on a light background and light text on a dark background. The font size also needs to be large (18pt or larger) as small text can get blurry or

pixelated when uploaded to social media. Any logos you add to the graphic should also be on a contrasting background and not be overlapped by other elements of the design.

**QR Codes and linking:** Do not post QR codes on social media or any other digital platforms.

**Facebook:** Place a link to wherever you want people to navigate to in the caption section so they can easily click the link, or in the Ticket section on a Facebook event.

**Instagram:** Utilize "link in bio" in the caption section of your post, and be sure to include a link to navigate to the page you want people to go to. You can also add a link sticker to Instagram Stories.

## Additional Resources

**Current VCE Social Media Best Practices:**  
[brnw.ch/vcesocial](http://brnw.ch/vcesocial)

**Virginia Tech Social Media Center:**  
[brnw.ch/vtsocial](http://brnw.ch/vtsocial)

## Additional Questions?

If you have questions or would like additional social media training, please [contact your Field Marketing and Communications Coordinator](#).

# Facebook Layout Examples and Performance Metrics:



Figure 3. The 2025 Women in Agriculture Gathering returned last month to Doswell, VA (photos by Camden Littleton). [View on Facebook](#)



Figure 4. Winter bale grazing for the Graze 300 program (photos by Camden Littleton). [View on Facebook](#).

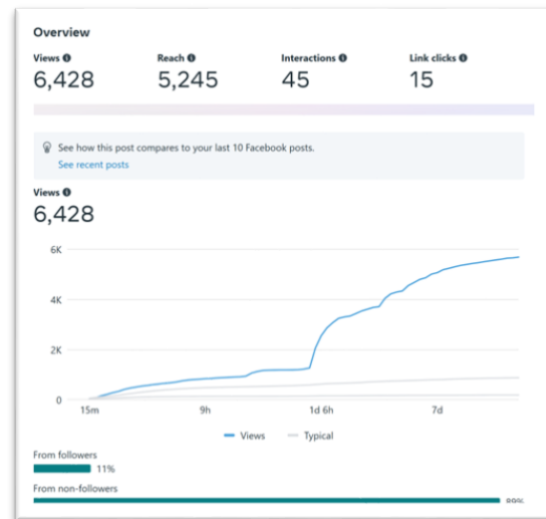


Figure 5. Winter bale grazing for the Graze 300 program Facebook post engagement. The graph shows that most interactions with the post came from non-followers and had a high reach (screenshot by Camden Littleton).

## Creating a Post for Social Media Checklist

### Visuals

- Include a relevant photo, video, or graphic.
- If you want to post several photos, plan your first five BEST high-quality images to engage your audience.
- Avoid uploading full PDF flyers — use simplified graphics or photos.
- Ensure good contrast for maximum legibility: light text on dark background or vice versa.
- Add alt text describing the image (including any text shown in the image).

### Post Text

- Write a clear and engaging caption.
- Include important details: who, what, when, where, and why.
- Mention the city, county, park, or building for local relevance.
- 😊 Add emojis (beginning/end of paragraph only; avoid mid-sentence).

- Include a call to action (e.g., register, join us, learn more).
- Add the URL for registering in the caption of Facebook posts.

- Like and share posts from partners if appropriate for your town, city, region, and audience.


[Visit Virginia Cooperative Extension: ext.vt.edu](http://ext.vt.edu)

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and local governments, and is an equal opportunity employer. For the full non-discrimination statement, please visit [ext.vt.edu/accessibility](http://ext.vt.edu/accessibility).

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## Links and Accessibility

- Include clickable links: Facebook (caption or ticket field), Instagram ('link in bio' or Story link sticker), or use the link emoji .
- Do not use QR codes.
- Check that the text size is large enough and easy to read on a mobile device.
- Use camel case for hashtags (e.g., #MasterGardenersOfFloyd).
- Captions are included for all videos.
- No emojis replacing text or mid-sentence.
- Non-discrimination statement visible (in Facebook About or Instagram bio link).

## Hashtags – Instagram Only

- Add 2–5 relevant hashtags, especially location-specific ones (e.g., #PulaskiCountyVA).
- Use hashtags to support event branding or tracking when applicable.

## Tagging

- Tag relevant partners, organizations, or speakers.
- Ensure you're following accounts before tagging them.

## Scheduling and Timing

- Confirm post timing fits the event or campaign schedule.
- Use Meta Business Suite to schedule if needed.
- Avoid posting too close to the event date unless it's a reminder.

## Engagement

- Be ready to monitor and reply to comments or questions.
- Do not like your own posts.