

# Spread the word: Expert says blogs help land-grant universities strengthen connection with public

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Blogs and other forms of social media are ideal tools to further the goals of academic institutions, especially the research, education and extension activities of land-grant universities like Kansas State.

That's the focus of an article authored by a Kansas State University food safety expert and two colleagues that will appear in the journal *Innovative Higher Education*. "Blogs, infosheets and new media as academic scholarship in food safety research, education and extension" is now available online in advance of publication at [bit.ly/vyzEhV](http://bit.ly/vyzEhV).

In the article, Doug Powell, a professor of food safety in the department of diagnostic medicine and pathobiology at K-State, says that researchers and extension personnel at [educational institutions](#) should be encouraged to use blogs and other [social media](#) to strengthen relations with public stakeholders and enhance their engagement with interested individuals, groups, and subject matter experts.

"We've been running [barfblog.com](http://barfblog.com) for almost five years and more than 5,000 posts," Powell said. "Some posts are scientific, some are sad and some are silly. But we keep readers coming back while promoting the goal of a safer food supply. Rather than just respond, we help shape the public discussion of food safety issues."

The article was co-written with Ben Chapman, assistant professor at

North Carolina State University, and Casey Jacob, a former K-State research assistant.

The authors note that while being more transparent and nimble with results, blogs and other online communication can compliment rather than replace the rigors of peer-review. Blogs and other online communication forums do represent an additional mechanism for the rapid sharing of ideas, methodologies, research, findings and dialogue. They also say disclosure should be provided on the procedures used for sourcing and conveying information, and references should be cited when appropriate.

"It's about building trust," Chapman said. "There's an abundance of information online, some evidence-based, some not. Researchers who use [blogs](#) and other social media can build trust by pulling back the curtain on discovery and showing an interested audience how they investigated a problem, limitations and all."

Provided by Kansas State University

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