**SFQ Editors/Writers Online Meeting, November 18th, 10:00am - 11:30am**

**10:00am Welcome and Introductions**

* + Violet Stone, SFQ Managing Editor, Small Farms Program
  + Abigail Woughter (Small Farms Student Intern)
  + Bruce Button and Richard Barrett (Country Folks)
  + Dan Rivera (farmer writer)
  + John Kudlack (farmer writer)
  + John Suscovich (farmer writer)
  + John Thurgood (NRCS)
  + Nancy Glazier (NW-NY Dairy)
  + Rachel Carter (Vermont Farm to Plate)
  + Rich Taber (CCE Chenango County)
  + Troy Bishopp (Madison County Soil & Water)
  + Laura Biasillo (CCE Broom County)
  + Martha Herbert Izzi (Farmer Writer, Vermont)
  + Ryan Maher, Small Farms Program
  + Steve Gabriel, Small Farms Program

**10:05am What is Working?  What Isn't?**  **What could improve SFQ?**

History

* SFQ founded 2004
* In its 11 years running, 44 issues and 880 articles published
* Initial goal was to reach farmers not connected to the computer and a dairy audience
* Writers have always been volunteers

**Editors' and Writers' critical review of:**

**a. submission process**

* Rich: issues with the form working/submitting properly
* Nancy: Does what browser you use make a difference?
  + John suggests using a different browser
* Rachel: captions for photos cut off sometimes
  + Captions sometimes get cut off during mail merge
  + But we’ve been going back to original submission forms to fix this issue

**b. support from Cornell Small Farms Program office**

* Troy wonders about writer stipends
  + Country Folks gets paid through ads primarily
  + There’s no budget for the Quarterly – it’s all volunteer based
  + Could work with country folks to increase subscriptions to potentially use some $ to pay writers

**c. magazine's visibility, content and success**

* Are there other distribution outlets outside of Country Folks?
  + On Cornell campus – deans’ offices, libraries, etc.
  + CCE offices across the state, then distributed to farmers in individual counties
  + NH Farm Bureau – Quarterlies mailed directly to them from Country Folks
* Nancy: suggests sending news releases to extension offices, advertising bulk copy sales

**10:20am Editors & Writers Roundtable.   How do you find writers or topics?  How do you know what is timely and relevant?** (i.e. Listserves, Surveys, Conference Brochures, Published Research, Social Media​)

* Violet draws list of potential topics for each issue from Conference Brochures titles of workshops and research topics because they are timely and relevant to the ag community
* John Thurgood: approaches colleagues inside and outside his organization, as well as farmers, to write for him, adds them to a list so he can reach out to them repeatedly to write articles, cultivating long-term relationships with his potential writers
  + Sends a request to his potential writers a month before content is due
  + People on his list are people he works with, has worked with in the past, farmers he meets at conferences
  + Writers sometimes lose enthusiasm in absence of a stipend, suggests a $50-100 stipend
* Laura: uses a few different listserves:
  + NE Food, ComFood (?)
  + Cornell listserves like Extension Educators
  + Easy to reach people, but can result in information overload for people on the list serve
  + Need to explain the Quarterly, help people think of topics
  + Big pool of interested potential writers
* John Suscovich: writes about problems he encounters on his own farm (Troy’s approach to topics as well)
  + Suggests farm visits as an effective way to find timely and relevant topics, as well as inspiration
  + Look to write about/solve problems not readily solved by Googling
* Nancy: writes most of the articles herself
  + Likes to get information from farmers to share
  + Looks out for “hot, emerging topics in grazing”
  + Has reached out to co-workers for help with articles
* Rachel: tries to take key topics being discussed in Vermont and neighboring states and gets a farmer perspective on higher level food-system topics
  + Her challenge: getting a farmer perspective can be difficult because she doesn’t work directly with them every day/have as easy access to farms as other writers
* Dan: suggests looking at current events for timely, relevant topics to wrote about, such as new grant programs
  + Be careful of writing about something that’s so timely that it passes too quickly, doesn’t really have “shelf-life” to be put in a quarterly magazine
* Martha: looking for farm energy articles?
  + Yes, and seeking an editor for farm energy as well
  + Quite timely and relevant topic in discussion of climate change and alt energy
* Articles about farm profitability encouraged

**10:40am  Content Review**

What does Small Farm Quarterly publish?  What does Small Farm Quarterly reject?  We’ll look at some real-life examples of articles and talk through elements that make a stellar article versus one that gets sent back.

* A few articles that have been very successful:
  + “Reconnecting Refugee Farmers to Their Agricultural Roots”
    - An example of an organization sharing the kind of work that they’re doing with farmers
    - The problem with this can be that the organization focuses on themselves, not on the farmers they work with and how the farmers are impacted – this article avoids this pitfall
    - Effective use of details of the problem being solved and a variety of quotations
    - Explains the problem the organization is addressing right away
    - Doesn’t just focus on their own organization – also talks about other training programs helping to tackle the same problem
    - Sidebar with more info on these supporting organizations
    - Appeals to emotional sensibilities – expresses heartfelt rationale for the organization’s work
  + “Farm Profit: Making a Life and a Living from Your Farm”
    - An example of a DIY farmer article
    - Detailed and from what the author knows
    - Author offers not only her own thoughts, but presents different ways farmers think about farm profit
  + “Mighty Food Farm: Abundance in the Pownal Valley”
    - A small farm spotlight – one of the most common and popular kinds of Quarterly articles
    - Again – detail makes it valuable and interesting to read
    - Tells a story, transports the reader to the farm, gives a tour of the farm and introduces important people on the farm
    - Emotional components – what motivates the farmer, her plan for what’s ahead
    - Highlight opportunities *and* challenges – don’t be afraid to talk about what changes are needed in the future, where there is room for improvement in farming
* An article that was sent back for revision, an example of what to try to avoid: “Confessions of a CT Aquaponics Farmer”
  + The article was more promotional than content rich
  + The piece was more an advertisement than an article
  + Doesn’t mention details of farming process, such as varieties grown and markets attended
  + Concludes with an ask for business. It’s okay to link to a website and give contact information but not to offer consulting services, etc directly in an article.
  + Violet provided the author with some guiding questions for revisions and asked for him to include resources and details
  + Violet shares letter she sent to author as an example of language editors can use when they receive articles like this one

**10:55am SFQ Online**

Did you know SFQ articles are read online long after their publish date?  We’ll look at some examples of articles that have generated comments from all over the country and the world.

* Data on articles with most online comments and most page views received over the last 3-4 years
  + Top 3 articles are by Ulf Kintzel, who provides very detailed narratives about his own specific sheep grazing processes
  + How-to, detailed DIY articles among the most popular
* 25 Comments on “The Perfect Sheep Pasture”
  + Commenters ask questions
  + Respond to each other
  + Post additional resources
  + Thank the author for his work
* Shows the long shelf-life of online content – these articles continue to be visible long after circulation of print copies
* John Thurgood: Ulf’s strong online presence may help readers to find him through the Quarterly and contributes to the popularity of his articles

**11:10am SFQ Reader Stats: Who are SFQ readers and what are they interested in?**

**Subscriber break-down**

* New York: 13,323
* Vermont: 849, thanks to Rachel, Martha, John, other VT folks

**Ad Trends**

* Richard and Bruce: the trend Country Folks is seeing is consistency
  + Over past 5 years, ad numbers have been steady at 18-25 ads per issue
  + Advertisers are fencing, dairies, creameries, seed companies, ag remediation programs, organic products, tractors and equipment, composting, organic labelling and equipment, renewable energy
  + Quality content is a draw for repeat advertisers
  + Some advertisers come and go seasonally
  + The Cornell name is a good draw for enticing new advertisers
  + Advertisers are also connected to small farms – has a direct connection to the content reaching farmers, a nice synergy for advertising, sales, and content of SFQ
  + Topics drive search for advertisers each season
* What is the minimum number of subscribers needed to keep the magazine going?
  + 17,000 subscribers has been relatively stable
  + Extra circulation of 2,000 copies distributed by NH Farm Bureau
  + There’s not necessarily a minimum
  + Readership is up to 19,000 printed distributed copies
* Online link to advertising info?
  + Yes, on the SFQ website, we direct advertisers to Country Folks
  + Country Folks has an online media kit available for potential advertisers to download
  + While the SFQ is an insert in Country Folks, there are also people who are SFQ subscribers *only*

**Reader Analytics​​**

* How many people access the online reader?
  + Analytics snapshot – 325 visitors in the last month, just to the online reader
  + Accessing the Quarterly from the SFP website – another 760 people a month, accessing current or previous issues
  + Roughly 12,000 readers a year accessing SFQ content

**11:25am Recognition for Service.**How can we improve upon bringing SFQ contributors greater visibility and recognition?

* Current efforts
  + Editorial team and contributing writers page on SFP website
  + Masthead of print SFQ
* John: the SFQ is a great vehicle for outreach from the NRCS and the Quarterly’s values fit well with the NRCS and the organization’s goals
* Nancy: writing for SFQ gives the opportunity to reach a different audience of farmers and aspiring farmers than those that she works with in her job
* Rachel: ability to share online SFQ content on social media is a plus
* Allowing reprints so farmers can get paid through other avenues?
  + Troy: reprints can allow for increased visibility of the SFQ in other publications, gaining greater exposure to increase readership and advertising avenues
  + Troy: paying writers would increase writer willingness
* Dan: the value of writing for SFQ is that you can benefit yourself, readers, and Cornell
  + Online SFQ content has increased traffic on Dan’s own website
  + Sees it as an honor to write for SFQ
  + Recognizes benefit of increasing his own social media/online presence
  + Writers: remember to include a link to your own website in the author info blurb at the conclusion of your articles
* John S.: reminds writers to remember to share your articles on your own Facebook pages and websites to increase visibility and traffic your own farm sites