

6.

Heads That Pull in Readers

WE FOUND OUT EARLY that subject matter was more important than layout, style, illustrations or anything else. If an editor could guess what readers would be excited about at the time the paper hit the mail box and could deal with that subject, the readership score would be high.

On a head, then, the first thing is to make sure that it indicates what the copy is about. This sounds easier than it is. For one thing, it means using terms that are well-known.

One horrible example came in the Starch survey of *Wallaces Farmer* (October 15, 1960.) The poll article dealt with methods of getting cropland out of production, but the head played up the technical term "cross-compliance." One result was that the Read Most score for men was only 26 per cent, one of the lowest ever scored on a poll story.

This was an error in editorial judgment. I had thought "cross-compliance" had been talked about enough so that farmers knew what it was. I was wrong.

If the article is about hogs, get the word "hog" in the head. If it is about fertilizer, say "fertilizer." The label has value.

You want more than a label, of course. One stock head that always registers is "What Price for Hogs Next Fall?" For a human interest story, there is a wider range. "What Happened to Mary Jones" was the head of an article tracing graduates of a rural high school.

An early head about retired farmers said "To Town, to California or to Heaven." This off-beat head probably did better than a label "Retired Farmers," but we didn't try a split on it. There is danger in trying to be too bright and original at the cost of making the reader guess as to what you are talking about.

In the early years of the poll, we didn't score heads by themselves. We figured that if the Read Some score was good, that proved the head was all right. Since then, we have tried scoring heads from time to time and find once in a while that a good scoring head is not necessarily followed by a good score on the following copy. The important thing still is whether the head pulls the reader into the article. If only the head is read, it isn't much good even if it does seem to score high.

Actually I have some doubts about the accuracy of these head scores. It is harder for a respondent to remember noticing a head than to remember actually reading some of an article.

Should the head use a question or a command?

A double split was tried out in *Wisconsin Agriculturist* (November 2, 1957). Heads were as follows (Figure 6.1) :

A — “New Concentrates Will Sell More Milk”

B — “Will New Concentrates Sell More Milk?”

A — “Will New Hormones Change Crops?”

B — “New Hormone Could Change Crops”

Combining the two splits for Read Some, the statement got 52 per cent with men and the question 48.5. Young men readers especially seemed to prefer the statement to the question. Women leaned slightly toward the question.

In *Wallaces Farmer* (November 5, 1949) the following heads were tested:

“Don’t Plan Too Many Spring Pigs”

“Are You Planning More Pigs?”

Here the statement scored higher than the question. Apparently the readers were looking for advice, and the positive statement had more appeal.

One thing we are more sure of is this: Don’t limit the size of your audience by your head. In *Wallaces Farmer* (March 4, 1944) a head, “Dairy Association Hears Report” scored 20.8 Read Some for men. “Reports Fight on Oleo” or its equivalent might have done better.

Similar disadvantages come from putting the name of a country in a head, from using “4-H” in a head or the label of any minority group. Farm Bureau, because of its large membership, can be used in Iowa.

Minority groups should not be ignored. We are entitled to use a 4-H story occasionally, a sheep story, even a bee-keeper’s story. But the scores are bound to be low.

If there is any way to handle the head or copy to get the majority interested in the minority theme, use it. "These Boys Build Beef Herds" is better than "4-H Boys Build Beef Herds." On the first, you'll get the 4-H readers and some others. On the second, your audience may be limited to 4-H'ers.

Do decks (sub-titles) help a head? We have been using two lines of 18-point Bodoni and have run a number of splits to see whether this addition or others to a 36-point or 42-point head increased readership.

Here is one typical split from *Wallaces Farmer* (January 18, 1948):

A — Head: "More Profit From Early Beef Calves"
(No deck)

B — Same head as A plus deck: "Early Calves Make Better Use of Pasture; Weigh More at Market Time"

Men had 57 per cent Read Some for A and 49 per cent for B.

Another split in same issue on the same subject was:

A — Head: "Soil Insect Control"

Deck: "Deep Placement of Starter Fertilizer Calls for Shift in Soil Insecticide Application"

B — Same head, no deck

On this A had 56 per cent for Read Some for men and the same for B. Combining scores, 52.5 Read Some for men on head and deck; 56.5 for head without deck.

Apparently this kind of deck did no good. Similar

tests on other types of decks indicated the same answer. Apparently the standard two-column head does well by itself.

Some experiments with lead-ins — a short line leads into the head — indicate this way of supplementing the head may have some value.

In *Wisconsin Agriculturist* (February 18, 1956) we tried a lead-in to a one-line head "When Does It Pay To Add More Land" as against conventional two-line head and two-line deck. Read Some for men was 75 per cent for the lead-in and 65 per cent for the regular head.

Although the differences are not significant, the edge is certainly toward the lead-in.

A two-line head was run against a one-line head in *Wallaces Farmer* (November 21, 1959). The one line did a little better, 27 to 22 for Read Some with men; 57 to 49 with women.

Another test of heads came in *Wallaces Farmer* (January 18, 1959). A used the head "Collect Dividends with Farm Records" and B "Need a Fulltime Secretary Soon?" No change in type was made.

Read Some favored A with men (52 to 43); women favored B (32 to 26). Perhaps "secretary" pulled the women in.

Advertisers have experimented with head splits. Starcross Alfalfa in *Wallaces Farmer* (January 17, 1959), ran a big head on the left-hand page of a split in A and switched the head to the right-hand page in B. The head scored better on the left-hand page (40 to 27 for men) and Read Some on copy was also strong (23 to 10).

Allied Chemical tried a split on heads in *Wallaces Farmer* (March 17, 1956), as follows:

A — “Crops Make Money with Arcadian”

B — “I Like Arcadian 12-12-12”

There was no significant difference, except for a slight edge to A (Read Some, men 22 to 19). Other splits indicate that “profits,” “make money” etc. may sometimes be good labels for ads.

Another test of headlines was made in *Wisconsin Agriculturist* (April 5, 1958) with a fertilizer ad. Here the competition was between “Get 74 Bushel Increase from ‘Tired’ Cornland” and the head “Plow Down Nitrogen for Corn? Sure” (Figures 6.3, 6.4).

On this, the second head came out better, with a score of 33 per cent against 23.2. The stronger headline pulled up copy scores. The Read Some score on sales copy was 24 for the “plow down” head and 15.9 for “74 bushel increase.”

Why did farmers apparently prefer the second head? One guess is that the first head claimed too much. A 74 bushel increase may have simply looked too big. A Wisconsin farmer who averaged 50 bushels might add the 74 to 50, whistle and say, “It can’t be done.”

The second head, incidentally, scored where it counted, among larger corn growers and among those who said they used nitrogen on corn.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, working with Herman Felstenhausen of the Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin, checked the influence of using the profit motive in the head. In the issue of April 2, 1960, in eight splits, one head played up profits and

the other head workmanship, interest in conservation or some other non-profit motive (Figure 6.4). Here are two examples. The scores are the percentage of men readers of the issue who read some or most of the article:

Build Corn Profit With Weed Killers	vs.	Keep Corn Clean With Weed Killers
46%		52%
Build Better Herd With DHIA Testing	vs.	Boost Herd Income With DHIA Testing
54%		46%

When all the results were considered, Felstenhausen concluded, "The results showed no preference for one motivation headline over another." (1)

You can put "dollars" in the headline, but it may not work. Heads stressing conservation, the pleasure of doing a good job or other motives may get just as good a response.

It seems plain that a good deal more work should be done with heads. In case after case, we find instances where a good head has pulled up a mediocre story; a poor head has lowered the score on a good story.

* * *

What should a good head have?

1. The good head should have plenty of white space around it. The jammed up head suffers.
2. The old two-line deck doesn't seem to have much value. Try more lead-ins.

3. Put a label on the story. Is it about hogs, or dairy cattle, or fertilizer, or what? Sometimes this can be handled as a Tead-in.
4. After labelling the story, try to get some color into the rest of the head. Quotes can have value.
5. Perhaps it would pay to have the writer of an article submit four or five heads. Let the desk try to work up a few more. Sort for the best.
6. Don't use words that the reader can't understand. Technical language, in ads or editorial copy, will not get across.
7. If you want to attract a minority group — tobacco growers, honey producers, maple sugar makers — a head so labelled is useful in pulling in these particular folks. But it may repel the rest of your audience. Playing to minorities makes sense at times, but know what you are likely to gain and what you are likely to lose.

Figure 6.1

Question Head

Read Some

Men 53%

Women 16%

Question vs. Statement

The only change in the articles reprinted here is the shift from question to statement in the head. A second split on "Keeping Corn Clean" also showed little difference in response to the two kinds of heads.

An earlier split on "Planning More Spring Pigs" gave the edge to the statement in preference to the question. Sometimes folks want positive advice.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, November 2, 1957

Statement Head

Read Some

Men 50%

Women 14%

URIST AND FARMER

November 2, 1957



Gibberellic Acid caused corn at right to grow faster and tassle slightly earlier than corn at left. At harvest time, there was no difference in height or yield, however.

Will New Hormone Change Crops?

GIBBERELIC acid promises to be an important tool for farmers, truck gardeners, fruit and flower growers.

S. H. Wittwer of Michigan State University, where much work with gibberellic acid has been done, says the new chemical has six promising possibilities.

1. Producing earlier maturity in some crops.
2. Speeding up the flowering of such annuals as lettuce and radishes for seed production.
3. Hastening the germination of

earlier in the spring. Bluegrass and Bermuda grass begin growing earlier and faster. Brown summer-dormant bluegrass greens up after spraying.

In greenhouse tests bush snapbeans and shell-beans flowered two to three days earlier, set more pods and had mature seed a week earlier when they were treated. Treated broccoli developed marketable heads 10 to 15 days earlier.

Results May Vary

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Figure 6.2

Split Page A



From 50 bu. per acre to 124 bu. per acre is quite a jump in corn yields, yet that's the amazing increase Wayne Fox got on his Chasco, Maine, farm.

Gets 74 Bushel Increase from "Tired" Cornland

Read how Wayne Fox used a plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate plus starter fertilizer to increase his corn yields, from 50 bu. per acre to 124 bu. per acre:

When Wayne Fox started farming in 1934, he had eighty acres of land that "had been created in death" by heavy corn.

Still, his good level land yielded 40 bushels of corn per acre the first year, and "about the same for '35 and '36."

But last season, Wayne decided to try to increase his corn yields.

His Fertilization Program

He applied 100 pounds of 5-20-20 starter fertilizer on all of his cornland with the exception of one acre he also plowed down 100 pounds of Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate. Just look what happened:

On the land that received starter fertilizer, the yield was 50 bushels per acre. But the acre that also got a spring plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" produced a whopping 124 bushels per acre!

Yes, with starter fertilizer his land yielded 20 more bushels per acre than he had ever gotten before. But with a complete fertilization program that included a plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" Wayne discovered he could get an increase of 74 bushels per acre — 100 more bushels of corn over the 1934 record from starter alone.

Extra Yields at a Bargain Price

Wayne tells us that the cost of the Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate he plowed down

was only 50.00. That's a real bargain price to pay for 25 more bushels of corn — 100 more. Wayne realizes that he couldn't have gotten such an amazing increase without special fertilizer in addition to "Mr. N."

But only after time did it sink in that he didn't plow-down Spencer "Mr. N" on all of his cornland that season. He'll plow-down that extra acre in spring to get a spring plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N."

Why Plow-Down Pays Off So Big

Right now is the time to plow down Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate. A spring plow-down of "Mr. N" takes special development of corn roots, and that helps obtain an extra supply of nitrogen to the corn. But that's not all.

Plowing down Spencer "Mr. N" in the spring can help even out the soil and break up clods. It also helps to break up the soil.

Choosing Nitrogen for Plow-Down

While there are many different sources of nitrogen for plow-down, Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate is the proven fertilizer. It's easy to handle. Spencer "Mr. N" is available in 50 and 100 lb. bags that won't clog or leak your machine. "Mr. N" stays free-flowing, too, because it's packed in polyethylene-lined bags for 100% dryness.

So after those extra profitable extra bushels of corn this year, Plow-down Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate this spring for next year!



Comparing the yields shows extra yield Wayne Fox got by using a complete fertilization program that included a spring plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate as well as starter fertilizer.



Guaranteed 22.2% nitrogen — that's Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate. You know what you're getting, because you can see it. For it, even when it "Mr. N" is made in round, uniform price that won't clog or leak your sprayer. Contact us in polyethylene-lined bags for 100% dryness. Ask for Spencer "Mr. N" — the proven source of nitrogen for plow-down. (A-14)

Page Score

Men 32.9%

Women 21.6%

Strong Head Helped This Ad

Only one change was made in this split. The head in A read "Gets 70 Bushel Increase from 'Tired' Cornland." The head in B read "Plow-Down Nitrogen For Corn? Sure!"

The B head helped the higher score and pulled up the rest of the B ad with it.

	Men	
	A	B
Head	20.7%	33%
Sales Copy		
Read Some	15.9	24

Figure 6.3

Split Page B

Page Score

Men 49%

Women 26%



From 50 bu. per acre to 124 bu. per acre is quite a jump in corn yields, yet that's the amazing increase Wayne Fla. got on just 24 lbs. Chlorine, Muriel, Germ.



Comparing the yields shows even that Wayne Fla. got by using a complete fertilization program that included a spring plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate as well as starter fertilizer.

Plow-Down Nitrogen For Corn? Sure!

Read how Wayne Fla. used a plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate plus starter fertilizer to increase his corn yields from 50 bu. per acre to 124 bu. per acre:

When Wayne Fla. started testing in 1954, he had eighty acres of land that "had been thought to dead" for twelve years. Still, the good level land yielded 50 bushels of corn per acre for 10 to 14, and "about the same for 15 and 16."

But last spring, Wayne decided to try to increase his corn yields.

His Fertilization Program.
He applied 100 pounds of 5-20-20 starter fertilizer on all of the covered with this planter. On one acre he also plowed down 100 pounds of Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate. Just look what happened:

On the land that received starter fertilizer, the yield was 80 bushels per acre. But the acre that also got a spring plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" produced a whopping 124 bushels per acre!

Yes, with starter fertilizer his land yielded 20 more bushels per acre than he had ever gotten before. But with a complete fertilization program that included a plow-down of Spencer "Mr. N" Wayne discovered he could get an increase of 44 bushels per acre — 20 more bushels of corn over the field received from starter alone.

Extra Yields at a Bargain Price
Wayne tells us that the cost of the Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate he plowed down

was only \$6.00. That's a real bargain price to pay for 100 extra bushels of corn.

Right now is the time to plow down Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate. A certain plow-down of this fertilizer will give you an extra supply of nitrogen to the corn. That's what's so all.

Plow-down Spencer "Mr. N" in the spring can help corn combine normal growth an extra two days in two weeks or one of three!

Choosing Nitrogen for Plow-Down
While there are many different sources of nitrogen for plow-down, Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate is the greatest fertilizer.

Every 10 bushels, Spencer "Mr. N" is made in round, uniform pills that won't cake or clump and granulate. "Mr. N" stays flowing too, because it's packed in polyethylene-lined bags for 100% extra protection extra long.

So, if you have extra polyethylene extra bags for 100% extra. Ask for Spencer "Mr. N" — the safest source of nitrogen for plow-down.



Guaranteed 23 3/4% nitrogen — that's Spencer "Mr. N" Ammonium Nitrate. You know what you're getting, because you can see it. And 50-50-50 weight of "Mr. N" is made in round, uniform pills that won't cake or clump and granulate. So, if you have extra polyethylene extra bags for 100% extra. Ask for Spencer "Mr. N" — the safest source of nitrogen for plow-down.

(Advertisement)

Farmers who used nitrogen on corn gave B the advantage.

Men	Use nitrogen on corn	Don't use
Any This Ad		
A	22.7%	25.0%
B	34.0	30.0

Farmers with larger corn acreages also preferred B — as did farmers who generally used some kind of commercial fertilizer.

Why did the B head win? One possibility is that A claimed too much. A farmer, who habitually got 50 bushels of corn to the acre, might be dubious about the possibility of increasing the yield 70 bushels, up to a total of 120 bushels.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, April 5, 1958

Figure 6.4 Heads

Read Some

"Corn clean" Men 52%

Profit vs. Workmanship

Does it increase readership to put dollars in the head—such as, "Build Corn Profit with Weed Killers" instead of "Keep Corn Clean with Weed Killers" or "Boost Herd Income" instead of "Build Better Herd."

Farmers don't always respond to the profit theme. A series of splits found that putting "dollars" or "profit" in the head was not a sure way to high scores.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, April 2, 1960

Read Some

"Corn profit" Men 46%

Keep Corn Clean with Weed Killers

JUST how good are those new chemicals for weed control in corn?

Chemicals—simazine and atrazine—have produced some startling results. They've also caused disappointment.

The decision whether or not to use them this spring will need to be made soon. Pre-emergence weed killers should be applied at corn planting time. They don't work effectively after weeds come up.

There's no doubt that the chemicals provide a major breakthrough in corn weed control—if conditions are right for their use. But under the wrong conditions they can be an expensive mistake.

Cost Is High

Your choice between the two—simazine and atrazine—is nearly a tossup. So says Kenneth Buchholtz, University of Wisconsin agronomist. Simazine has been on the market three years. Atrazine came out last year. Atrazine appears a little better in research to date.

Their main drawback so far is cost.

The spraying should be done at planting time or within the next three days. Early application increases the chances of getting ahead of spring rains.

Equip your sprayer with 20-gallon nozzles and coarse nozzle screens to prevent clogging. Be sure the sprayer has an agitator or a large pump that returns part of the flow to the tank. This constant mixing assures even spray distribution.

Avoid excessive over-dosage. Heavy application may leave a residue which could affect grain crops the following year. Oats are especially sensitive.

If grassy weeds are not a serious problem and if the corn field is well drained, then you can turn to other weed control measures.

After broad leaf weeds come up, 2,4-D works well. Apply it before the corn is 10 inches tall. Later treatment may damage the corn unless drop nozzles are used to keep the spray off the corn leaves.

Perennial weeds require special treatment. Don't neglect them in planning your weed control pro-

Build Corn Profit with Weed Killers

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