

Auctioneers Risk Voice Damage Unless Precautions Followed

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*Food And Family
Features Editor*

EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — One of the most valuable resources an auctioneer has is a voice. Protecting that voice is essential to a long, successful career.

Peter Americo, speech pathologist from Charleston, W. Va., often works with auctioneers to help them prevent voice damage or with voice rehabilitation.

"Auctioneers use their voices vigorously in less than optimal environments," Americo said.

Speaking in a loud and rapid voice depletes breath pressure. According to Americo, an auctioneer may speak on residual air while bid calling. This squeezes the vocal cords tightly and the irritation can lead to vocal nodules and make them susceptible to various larynx problems.

Americo compares voice care to car care. "The piston head and cylinder need a thin coating of oil for a car to operate properly. If kept oiled, the car can run a long time. Likewise, a thin coating of

mucous is needed on vocal cords. You can speak for a long time if that is kept intact."

Auctioneers often speak loudly and rapidly in order to be heard above the noise of a crowd. This strains the voice. If auctioneers continue to talk after straining their voices, the vocal cords become irritated. Their voices may sound hoarse. Laryngitis occurs when the vocal cords become so swollen and thick they cannot produce sound.

Persistent hoarseness or breathiness often signals a voice disorder. Frequent throat clearing can cause a vicious circle. Vocal cords become dry and secretions thick, which irritate the vocal cords.

"Discipline yourself to make sure you are not subconsciously clearing your throat out of habit," Americo said.

Dry and windy conditions also irritate the throat. Auctioneers often work in dusty surroundings, especially at livestock sales.

"A person who has allergies to dust is really in trouble. Antihistamines used to treat allergies will dry up vocal tissues," Americo said.

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