
Office of Information Affairs Notice

Date: February 18, 2026

To: All Social Media Account Administrators, Agency Records Officers

From: Alexis R. Graves, Director

Subject: Guidance on Social Media Account Back Up and Sunsetting Procedures for Records Management

After formally obtaining a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) social media account through the Office of Communication's (OC) formal process, this guidance must be applied in addition to the guidance provided by OC in the [USDA Digital Strategy](#) for Social Media.

Account Records Management: Backups

When a social media account is in active use, regular backups of the account must be completed. Backups must be completed by personnel after adding new posts, making significant changes to the content on the site, and on a set schedule such as every week or bi-weekly.

Backups must include all content, context and structure, as well as any associated metadata, such as author name or date of creation. Capture methods include:

- Web crawling;
- Web capture;
- Application Programming Interfaces (API) to pull content;
- RSS feeds, aggregators, or manual methods of capture; or
- Tools built into the social media site which export content.

The backups must be stored in a Department managed location such as a SharePoint site for management by the Department's records management system, AgRecords;

Backups should be organized by platform folder, role/account/handle name, and backup date, such as:

- Folder [Social Media Backup] > [Platform] > [Role / Account / Handle Name],
Backup YYYY-MM-DD

An example may look like:

- Social Media Backup > YouTube > Food Safety and Inspection Service, Backup 2025-12-19
- Social Media Backup > Flickr > Farm Service Agency, Backup 2025-12-19
- Social Media Backup > X > RHS_Administrator, Backup 2025-12-19

Departing Personnel / Archiving Accounts

For Personnel Departures, USDA will be archiving retired personnel accounts and creating new accounts for their successors. To facilitate USDA discovery, legal search, records requests, and shifts in policy, please implement the following guidance for any retired account(s) such as a departing Secretary or a retired initiative account:

This applies to web pages, social media handles, SharePoint Sites, and other archives:

1. Collect an archive of all pages, sites, platforms, and validate that it came over without loss of data;
 - a. Capture the look and feel (screenshots, PDF-A);
 - i. Screenshots: Here is an [example of a print to PDF screenshot](#) that captures USDA's Facebook landing page.
 - ii. PDF-A: Here is a step-by-step guide to manually save a USDA webpage as a PDF using Adobe Acrobat's PDF/A Web Capture feature, following your naming convention:

Before You Start

Ensure Adobe Acrobat Pro is installed (not just Reader).
Confirm that PDF/A compliance is enabled in Acrobat.

Steps to Capture the Web Page as PDF/A

1. Open Adobe Acrobat

Launch Adobe Acrobat Pro on your computer.

2. Access the Web Capture Tool

In Acrobat, go to:

File → Create → PDF from Web Page

(In newer versions: Tools → Create PDF → Web Page)

3. Enter the URL

In the dialog box, paste the USDA Records Management URL:
<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-general-counsel/office-information-affairs/records-management-division>

4. Configure Capture Settings

Click Capture Multiple Levels if you want linked pages (optional).
For a single page, leave it at Get only 1 level.
Click Settings:

Under General, select Create PDF/A-1b compliant file.
Adjust Page Layout and Encoding if needed.

Click OK to confirm settings.

5. Start the Capture

Click Create or Download.
Acrobat will fetch the page and convert it into a PDF.

6. Save the File with Your Naming Convention

When prompted to save:

Use a standardized naming convention, for example:

Folder [Social Media Backup] > [Platform] > [Role / Account / Handle Name], Backup YYYY-MM-DD; it might look like this:

Social Media Backup USDAGov Records Management Backup 2026-02-03.pdf.

Choose your desired folder and click Save.

7. Verify PDF/A Compliance

Open the saved PDF in Acrobat.

Check the PDF/A status:

Go to File → Properties → Standards.

It should show PDF/A-1b compliant.

Result

You now have a properly captured, PDF/A-compliant copy of the USDA page with the correct file name.

- b. To the extent that pages such as usda.gov, cannot be recreated, archive the files and label them with specific to-from dates.
 - i. For example: Archive USDA Web Pages> USDAGov 2017-01-20 to 2025-01-19.
 - ii. For example: OC-Facebook-2017-01-20 to 2024-01-19.
 - iii. For example: @USDA could become @USDADept.
2. The account should remain public-facing but be placed in an inactive/static state (e.g., adding "Archived" to the bio), ensuring no further posts are made while remaining accessible to the public.
3. Create new handles, web pages, SharePoint Sites and URLs for the Administration to use;
4. Document the Social Media Accounts, by Agency, and Track Account Administrators, as well as Platform by Agency;
5. Track the mechanisms for each social media platform Archive method;
6. Create a SharePoint site for all USDA Social Media Administrators to place their backup files by Platform and Date; and
7. Contact USDADepartmentalRecords@usda.gov with any questions.

Account Sunsetting/Closure

When sunsetting or closing an account, a final, complete, backup account must be created. It is recommended that one of the backup methods noted in the “Account Records Management” section be used.

Prior to the final backup, the final site updates should include:

- A dated notice placed on the account page to inform individuals that the page is no longer being updated and is no longer being monitored.

- A redirect link to a replacement page, if appropriate.
- The site should remain public facing but be placed in an inactive/static state (e.g., adding "Archived" to the bio), ensuring no further posts are made while remaining accessible to the public.

When completing the final backup, the folder containing the full backup should be labeled similarly to the regular backups for the social media account. It will note the final backup date as the account closure date. Such As:

- Folder [Social Media Backup] > [Platform] > [Role / Account / Handle Name], Account Closed YYYY-MM-DD.

For example:

- Social Media Backup > Facebook > AMS_Administrator, Account Closed 2025-12-19.

If the social media account has not previously been backed up and appropriate tools are not available to the program or office to complete a full backup of the account, contact your [Agency Records Officer](#) (ARO) for assistance.

Once the final backup has been completed but prior to sunsetting/closing the account:

- Contact your [ARO](#) for a copy of the [Disposition Application](#).
 - Submit the [Disposition Application](#) to your ARO with the following information:
 - Name of the account to be sunset;
 - Link to the account;
 - Account administrator(s);
 - Intended sunset/closure date; and
 - Screenshot of the backup file structure.

The request will be reviewed by the ARO. During the review process:

- The account must be maintained as an archived account;
- All permissions to the account should be removed except for main account access username and password. If necessary, the password can be reset to prevent individuals from accidentally logging in and making changes; and
- No posts, messages, drafts, etc. should be added to or deleted from the account during the review process.

Once reviewed, the disposition request will be submitted, by the ARO, to all appropriate stakeholders for their approval.

Once approved by the appropriate stakeholders, the ARO will reach out to the requestor with the formal approval to sunset/close the social media account. The account cannot be sunset/closed until formal approval has been received from the ARO.

For any questions, contact the Departmental Records Program:

USDADepartmentalRecords@usda.gov.