

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Prevent Heat Stress



The ides of summer are upon us, and with that comes all the risks that can be brought on by heat. In the agriculture industry, the majority of our time is spent outdoors. That is the nature of our business. In the spring, there is planting, spraying and fertilizing - during the summer a continuation of spraying and planting and scouting for pests and diseases - and finally in the fall, it's harvest time again. As the sun is the lifeblood for crops, it can be a holy terror as we work out in it all the time. Because of these factors, I believe a "heads up" early in the year shall make everyone aware of the dangers of all heat illnesses.

Heat stress and heat illness are serious matters:

- Heat Stress is a buildup of body heat generated either internally by muscle use or externally by the environment.
- Heat exhaustion and heat stroke results when the body temperature is overwhelmed by heat. As the heat increases, body temperature and the heart rate rise painlessly.
- The most serious heat related illness is heat stroke. The symptoms are confusion, irrational behavior, convulsions, coma, and death. While over 20 percent of heat stroke victims die regardless of age, children seem to be more susceptible to heat strain than adults. In some cases, the side effects of heat stroke are heat sensitivity and varying degrees of brain and kidney damage.

HIGH TEMPERATURE + HIGH HUMIDITY + PHYSICAL ACTIVITY = HEAT ILLNESS:

Following are examples of heat illnesses, their symptoms, descriptions and precautions to take:

HEAT CRAMPS –

Description – Painful muscle spasms caused by loss of salt from excessive sweating.

Symptoms – Muscular pain and excessive sweating.

What to do –

- ~Get the victim to rest in a cool place.
- ~Give the victim cool drinks sprinkled with salt and salty foods, but not salt tablets.
- ~Remove tight or wet clothing that may restrict the blood flow.
- ~If cramps continue, seek medical help.

HEAT STROKE –

Description – A condition in which the body's temperature rises above 106 deg. F. (41 deg. C) and if not treated immediately may result in coma, brain damage or death.

Symptoms –

- ~Hot, dry flushed skin, usually with no sweating
- ~Agitation and confusion
- ~Headaches, nausea and vomiting

- ~Irregular pulse
- ~Rapid, shallow breathing
- ~Possible seizure and loss of consciousness
- ~Possible shock and cardiac arrest

What to do –

- ~Heat stroke is a medical emergency – Get medical help at once!
- ~Check victim's airway, breathing and circulation. Give CPR, if needed.
- ~Cool victim with sponge or spray, covering with cold, wet cloths, placing ice packs under armpits and groin, and fanning them as well.
- ~Move victim to cool area.
- ~Loosen or remove outer clothing
- ~If victim is conscious, provide cool drinks with salt sprinkled in and salty foods, but not salt tablets.

HEAT EXHAUSTION –

Description – A more advanced and serious stage of heat stress.

Symptoms –

- ~General fatigue, weakness, and poor muscle control
- ~Dizziness and fainting
- ~Headaches and nausea
- ~Pale, cool, clammy skin
- ~Heavy sweating
- ~Cramps
- ~Rapid pulse, shallow breathing

What to do –

- ~Heat exhaustion is life-threatening - Get medical help at once!
- ~Check victim's airway, breathing and circulation - Give CPR, if needed. If you haven't, **GET CERTIFIED in CPR!**
- ~Cool victim with sponge or spray, covering with cold, wet cloths, placing ice packs under the armpits and groin, and fanning.
- ~Move victim to cool area.
- ~Loosen or remove outer clothing.
- ~If victim is conscious, provide cool drinks with salt sprinkled in and salty foods but no salt tablets.

PROTECT YOURSELF –

- Learn to recognize the symptoms of heat stress and how to treat them.
- On hot days, don't spare the water, drink often during the day.
- Wear loose clothes made of cotton and other fabrics that allow the air to pass through.
- Gauge your work habits and take sufficient breaks.

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