



To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

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State Veterinarian Reminds You That High Temperatures Can Cause Heat Stress in Livestock, Poultry and Pets

With a heat wave affecting much of the state, State Veterinarian Heather Hirst reminds you that these high temperatures can cause livestock and pets to suffer from heat-related stress.

Animals at the greatest risk of stress from extreme heat include the following:

- Intensively managed livestock or animals confined in enclosures such as paddocks, pens, yards and cages with limited access to, or no shade available
- Lactating or pregnant animals
- Heavier, fattened livestock and obese pets
- Animals with darker coats
- Those with chronic health conditions, especially those with respiratory or heart problems
- Short-nosed breeds of dogs
- Very young and older animals

Extremely high temperatures can be distressing for livestock and pets, therefore, it is critical that owners take precautionary measures to help prevent heat-related stress, and also closely monitor their animals to ensure that those suffering effects from the heat can be quickly treated.

Hirst recommends looking for signs of stress in livestock and pets and that are outside during the hottest part of the day. These signs include:

- Crowding together at the water tank or in areas of shade, panting, increased salivation, restlessness, muscle spasms (livestock)
- Prolonged panting (chickens)
- Rapid panting, increased heartbeat and body temperature, weakness, incoordination, bright red or pale and sticky gums, vomiting/diarrhea, depression (dogs and cats)
- Rapid breathing and stretching out (rabbits)

If your animals experience the symptoms listed or exhibit other unusual behavior which could be related to heat stress, contact a veterinarian immediately.

The department offers these tips for helping animals including cows, goats, horses, pigs, sheep, chickens, and pets deal with the heat:

- Provide shade – construct shades in available pens or move animals to shaded pens if possible.
- Provide plenty of cool, clean drinking water - as temperatures rise, animals need to consume more water. Spraying animals with water can also help them to cool down, using a sprinkler that provides large droplets.

- Avoid overworking livestock - it's safest to work with cattle early in the morning when their body temperatures are low. In addition, routine livestock management procedures such as vaccination, hoof trimming and dehorning should be postponed until the weather cools.
- Avoid unnecessary transportation - if livestock must be moved, try to do so in the late evening or early morning hours.
- Provide a secondary source of water, or a larger container (that can't be tipped over) for pets that are kept outside during the day since they will consume more. Add ice to keep the water cooler, longer.
- Provide fans to improve air circulation for animals in crates, stalls, smaller pens or cages.
- Provide frozen water bottles in rabbit hutches for them to lay against.
- Check fans in chicken houses to be sure they are working properly.

It is important to have proper ventilation for animals kept indoors. Commercial poultry growers should evaluate backup generators to be sure they are in working order should an electrical outage occur.

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