

Good Management Practices for Youth

Heat Stress

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As a good and responsible livestock producer, you are providing excellent care for your animal on a full-time basis. Below are sound production practices to help your animal thrive in your care. In addition, a checklist has been provided to make sure you follow these guidelines prior to and while at fairs and other public exhibitions.

This is No. 6 in a series of seven documents on **good management practices for youth**. Copies of these documents, commonly asked questions, feed and water requirements, and many other animal care and well-being documents can be accessed at <http://4h.unl.edu/resourceanimalcare>.



Prior to Fair

Many livestock shows are held in the hottest months of the year. Like you, animals cannot tolerate high heat for long periods of time. You can do several things to make your animal more comfortable and lower its risk of illness or death due to extreme heat.

Provide shade or shelter for your animal to get out of the sun. It will need to be able to get out of the sun at all times, especially if it has a dark hide/pelt/coat. Your animal should not be penned or housed in areas that block natural air flow to it. You also may provide fans or ice blocks (species specific) for your animal to help it stay cool. Please note, if your fans have misters on them or you are wetting down your animal, **you need to make sure the water droplets are large**. You want to wet the skin of your animal, not just the hair. Simply wetting the hair will actually create higher humidity and a more uncomfortable situation.

Abundant, cool water for your animal to drink is critical. And, during heat stress animals need additional water. If the drinking water is not covered, it could become very warm and discourage your animal from drinking it. You should provide shade or some other means of cooling the water. During the hot summer months, your animal will drink more water than normal. Like you, it can lose water through sweating, urination, defecation, lactation (if applicable), and breathing/panting.

Providing cool, clean drinking water will help it stay hydrated and keep it more comfortable on hot days.

You should work, exercise, or transport your animal very early in the morning or late at night when the temperature is cooler. Working your animal in the heat of the day could cause heat stress to it and to you!

Signs of heat stress (depends on the species) may include decreased appetite, animals bunching, seeking shade, panting, slobbering or excessive salivation, foam around the mouth, open-mouth breathing, lack of coordination, and trembling. If these symptoms are observed, assume the animal has a high heat load and immediately try to minimize the stress to the animal.

If you see your animal experiencing one or more of the signs of heat stress, immediately contact your parent/guardian, leader, or a veterinarian to determine a course of treatment. Treatment options include using fans to increase air flow and wetting the animal. The animal should be gradually wetted with cool water. Using excessively cold water should be avoided, as it will shock your animal's system. This process may need to be repeated until the heat stress symptoms have dissipated.

A cool water drench (administer orally) may help quickly decrease the animal's core temperature. This very effective method should be performed by someone who has experience in drenching an animal. Sprinklers or hoses can provide some relief to heat stressed animals. The water droplet size should

be large; misting (small droplets) may only add humidity and moisture to the air. Remember, if your animal is not used to sprinklers, it may become frightened, which will add to its stress level.

In a heat stress situation, immediate treatment must be provided or your animal will quickly decline in health and could eventually die.

As a good youth producer, I know that prior to fair my animal has received:

- adequate shade or shelter to get out of the sun,
- moving air from a fan (a mister that produces larger water drops that wet the skin of the animal can be very beneficial),
- use of ice to keep the animal cool (if applicable),
- plenty of fresh, clean, cool drinking water,
- safe movement during early morning or late evening, when temperatures are the coolest,
- observation for signs of heat stress,
- immediate care from a professional if heat stress is observed, and
- treatment to minimize stress as soon as possible.

While at Fair

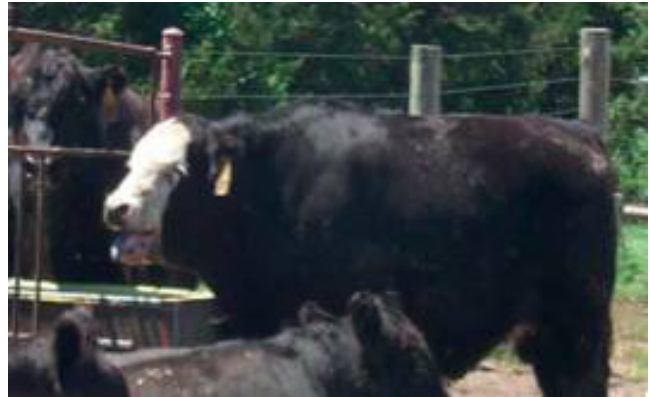
When you get to fair, it is important to ensure that your animal is stalled under shade. If shade is not available or does not entirely cover your animal, you may need to add shade such as a pop-up tent or shade screen so it will be entirely shaded. In addition, you may need to provide fans or another cooling source to keep your animal cool and comfortable.

You should provide fresh, clean, cool water at all times. Continue monitoring for signs of heat stress. If your animal appears to be suffering from heat stress, you should notify a parent/guardian, leader, or fair official immediately so treatment can begin. If immediate treatment is not provided, your animal will quickly decline in health and could eventually die.

Fair officials should take into consideration that livestock shows may need to be postponed until a cooler time of day (early morning or late night) if the heat index is projected to get above 115°F. The movement of animals and exhibitors in extreme temperatures may cause health concerns and possible death of animals.

As a good youth producer, I know that at fair my animal has received:

- adequate shade/shelter to get out of the sun,
- moving air from a fan for cooling (the addition of a mister that produces larger water drops that wet the skin of the animal can be very beneficial),
- applications of ice to keep cool (if applicable),



- plenty of fresh, clean, cool drinking water,
- careful moving during the early morning or late evening, when temperatures are the coolest,
- observation for signs of heat stress,
- immediate care from a professional if heat stress is observed, and
- treatment to minimize stress as soon as possible.

By following these guidelines prior to and during fairs and exhibitions, you can minimize stress on yourself and your animal. In return, your animal will not only perform better, but will also behave better. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have provided the best possible care for your animal.

Annually, Nebraska's youth are required to complete Quality Assurance (QA) training. Quality Assurance is a program that educates youth about the best management practices for livestock production. In addition, it was developed to assure consumers that the food products produced from animals are wholesome and safe, and that the animals that produced the product were cared for properly. In 2012, this training also was made available online for 4-H and FFA members at three different age levels: Junior (8-10); Intermediate (11-14); and Senior (15-18). More information about the Nebraska Youth QA Program can be found at <http://4h.unl.edu/qualityassurance>.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

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Index: Animals, General Management

Issued June 2012

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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