



Hot messaging helps keep livestock and pets cool

It's going to get hot this summer. Not everybody knows or remembers how to keep critters cool. Reminders help owners and animals.

Third in the series "Seen, Heard, Trusted" by Rick Purnell
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Summer arrives in just 10 days and forecasters predict hotter-than-average temperatures across much of the country. In fact, the three-month outlook from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggests that more than two-thirds of the country is leaning toward above-normal temperatures.

As temperatures rise, so does heat stress, a serious and preventable threat to animals. Its consequences extend beyond animal discomfort. Lower reproductive performance, decreased appetite, lower milk production, poor weight gain, lethargy, increased veterinary costs and even death are a few examples of what it can cause.

This is why animal owners need guidance from animal health professionals to help livestock and pets stay as cool as possible during extreme heat.

Share your livestock heat stress expertise

If you haven't already, review the elements of an outreach plan in the [March 26 column](#). You'll find two or three tactics that will help you spread the word to your clients and prospects about how to manage heat stress in animals.

For example, there are plenty of fairs during summer. They are perfect opportunities for veterinarians and technicians already helping with check-in procedures to remind exhibitors and their parents about the importance of shade, fans, feed and water consumption for their entries.

Reminders are necessary because heat-related problems can begin at relatively low temperatures.

- When nighttime temperatures stay above 70°F, [heat stress can affect beef and dairy cattle](#).
- Pigs can experience heat stress at 77°F and above.
- Goats and sheep can exhibit signs of heat stress starting at 82°F, according to South Dakota State University's Sheep and Goat [Temperature Humidity Index](#).
- Heat stress can be a concern in rabbits at 77°F, especially if they're exposed to sunlight.
- Most chickens become uncomfortable at 85° and higher.
- There are [eight reasons](#) to be cautious with horses in hot weather.

In addition to verbal nudges, share printed and virtual reminders with show participants before and during the fair. Land-grant universities are flush with online fact sheets and bulletins on managing heat stress in livestock. Link the ones most applicable to your clinic website and promote them via customer emails, the clinic Facebook page and other social media. This puts the information at participants' fingertips.

Or give them a literal fan. Specialty suppliers, such as [4imprint](#) and [PromoDirect](#), offer inexpensive hand fans that can double as educational tools. Print your clinic name on one side and bullet points about heat stress on the other. Share during check-in or a barn walk-through.

Hot dogs belong on the grill, not at the vet's

Since dogs can't sweat, they're highly susceptible to heat. It's no surprise, then, that AVMA provides common-sense advice and a free client handout about [warm-weather pet safety](#).

Dogs vary in their ability to handle heat, much like we do. The ones that are in shape do relatively well. Those that are new to the game or unfit need to be carefully watched. Four items linked in this [Animal Health Digest post](#) detail what to look for when monitoring for heat stress, heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

These resources offer plenty of material for media interviews and social media content through July 4 and further into summer.

Keep cats as cool as they think they are

While cats can sweat a little through their foot pads, they're still susceptible to heat stroke, a medical emergency when body temperature reaches 105°F. Heat, humidity, poor ventilation, lack of shade and water all contribute to heat stress, which can lead to heat stroke.

For most domestic cats, heat stress is preventable. Owners should ensure cats:

- are in well-ventilated areas
- have access to water and shade
- are supervised closely if allowed outside

Dr. Chris Vanderhoof's [article](#) is easily shared in full on social media, plus it has enough information that it can be parsed into a series of posts.

Always check your car

Fido and Fluffy often like car rides and we like having them with us when we're out. But, when weather is warm or hot, it pays to be extra cautious. If it is about 80°F outside, the temperature in a closed car can reach more than 120° in under an hour. If it's 90°F outside, interior car temperatures can reach upwards of 130°F in the same amount of time! Don't expose a pet to this type of risk. Leave them at home.

Leaving an animal in a parked car is illegal in 32 states. Check this [table](#) from Michigan State University and find out if your state is on it. In addition to the animal safety message, this can give your messaging some urgency.

AVMA offers sound information and an [easy-to-understand graphic](#) that can be shared with clients. Saving animals from the risk of closed cars is a topic that can be repeated in the clinic and on social media all summer. Repeat it with a colder message when cool weather hits.

Make your messaging memorable

Summer isn't all about heat waves and heat stress. It's an opportunity to strengthen client relationships through timely, useful communications that help protect livestock and pets. By weaving heat management reminders into conversations, social media posts and client outreach efforts, you can reinforce your role as a trusted resource while helping animals all season long.

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About the author

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