

SOUTHEAST AREA EXTENSION SAYS

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Livestock Heat Stress

My, what a difference six months makes in Southeast Colorado, it seems as if we were just discussing the cold temperature and wind chill effects on livestock. Today, producers need to be concerned about the effects of excess heat on those same animals!

According to a Clemson University Fact Sheet, using the “Temperature Humidity Index,” there are three stress categories: alert at 75 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit, danger at 79 to 83 degrees F, and emergency at 84+ degrees F. An increase in relative humidity to 40 percent moves the ranges to 84 F, 90 F, and 98 F respectively. As relative humidity increases, the lower the temperature threshold for the three stress categories. For more information on the temperature humidity index go to the web at: <http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/psapublishing/DISASTER/drought/Drout2.htm>

The difficulty with animals is most of their internal body temperatures are already at or over 100 F. Therefore, they are generating heat as part of the normal body functions, internal and external temperatures are too close thus making the release of internal heat difficult.



Extension
Southeast Area

County Extension Offices

Baca County
772 Colorado St.
Springfield, CO 81073
719-523-6971

Bent County
1499 Amb. Thompson Blvd.
Las Animas, CO 81054
719-456-0764

Cheyenne County
425 S. 7th W.
P. O. Box 395
Cheyenne Wells, CO 80810
719-767-5716

Crowley County
603 North Main St.
Courthouse Annex
Ordway, CO 81063
719-267-4444, ext. 7

Kiowa County
1305 Goff
P. O. Box 97
Eads, CO 81036
719-438-5321

Otero County
411 N. 10th
P. O. Box 190
Rocky Ford, CO 81067
719-254-7608

Prowers County
1001 S. Main
Lamar, CO 81052
719-336-7734

Guidelines for managing heat stress in livestock include:

- Check animals often.
- Provide cool, fresh drinking water – consumption may increase as much as 50 percent. (Normally an animal will drink about one gallon of water per 100 pounds of body weight. On very hot, humid days that value may increase to one and a half to two gallons per 100 pounds of body weight.)
- Provide shade, either permanent or temporary.
- If animals are kept inside, provide good ventilation.
- Do not overgraze: taller grass = cooler pastures
- Consider feeding at night vs. in the morning to shift the heat created by digestion to a cooler part of the day.
- If livestock must be worked, plan for early morning. Panting livestock indicates the danger level.
- Do not spray water on sheep in an effort to cool them. Wet wool does not allow air flow over the skin so no cooling will occur.
- Do not over exercise the animals.
- Use care when cooling adults with young. Sows need to be cooled, piglets require heat.
- Pigs do not sweat; they cool down by wallowing in water and mud. Provide a cool surface to lie on and sprinkle with water for one to two minutes every 20 to 30 minutes.

For more information or questions about heat stress in animals, contact your local veterinarian or nearest CSU Extension office in Bent, Baca, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Prowers, or Otero Counties in Southeast Colorado.