

Outdoor Workers Risk Harm From Summer Heat

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Farmers and others who work outside during summer should protect themselves from heat and humidity, says a safety expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Warm temperatures and high humidity combined with heavy work can threaten your health," says Dr. Dennis Murphy, professor of agricultural engineering. "If you'll be working and playing outdoors this summer, pace yourself and stop periodically to cool off. Stay alert for signs of heat stress, which occurs when the body builds up more heat than it

can get rid of."

Depending on its severity, heat stress can develop into heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Symptoms of heat cramps include muscle spasms and heavy sweating. Heat exhaustion is marked by fatigue, heavy sweating, dizziness, nausea and fainting. Heatstroke, the most serious heat-related condition, can result in coma or death. Initial symptoms include altered perspiration, shivering, nausea and confusion.

What can you do to prevent heat stress? "Drink plenty of water before and after working," says Murphy. "Don't rely on thirst to

tell you when to drink, because you can lose a dangerous amount of water before you feel thirsty."

Consider your age and health when deciding what and how much you can safely do. "Take work breaks to fight fatigue and extend your energy," Murphy says. "Do the hardest jobs in the morning or late afternoon, when temperatures are cooler."

Wear loose clothing that allows air to circulate on the skin. Adequate clothing and a hat will protect you from skin damage caused by the sun's ultraviolet rays.

If you must work in a hot or poorly ventilated building, open

the doors and windows to get all the ventilation possible. "Set up electric fans if you can do it safely and without raising too much dust," says Murphy. "Go outside often for fresh air."

If you feel dizzy, lightheaded, weak or overheated, or if you sweat profusely, stop working and get to a cool place immediately. "Sit or lie down, drink water or juice, and bathe your face with cool water or a wet towel," Murphy says. "If you don't feel better soon, call for help."

If your farm has employees, allow them to have a period of adjustment when they begin a new job or when the weather changes abruptly. "People differ in their ability to work in hot and humid conditions," says Murphy. "Keep

that in mind, and read your first aid manual's section on heat-related illnesses so you'll know how to treat them if they occur."

Also pay attention to humidity levels. Like the wind chill index during winter, a humidity index gives you a better idea of what it really feels like to be outside. "If the temperature is 85 degrees Fahrenheit but the air is dry, conditions are pleasant," Murphy says.

"But if the humidity rises to 60 percent, you may be more prone to heat exhaustion. At 95 degrees Fahrenheit and with humidity in the 60s, heat rises well above body temperature. This dramatically increases the risk of heat stress, especially for those who are working or playing hard."

Wolff Participates In Ag Accord

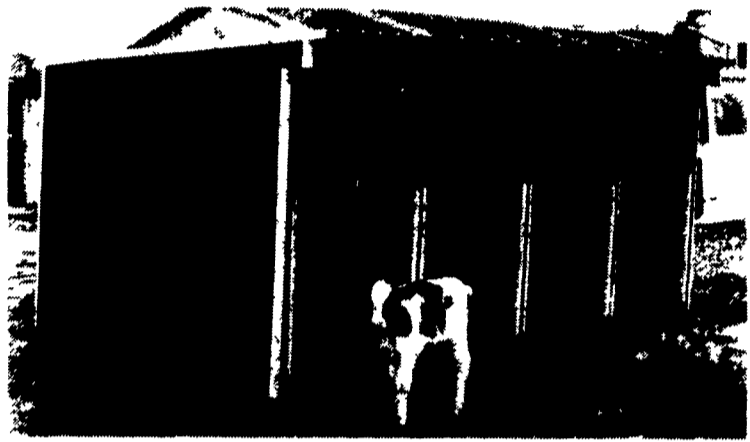
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff said that the interests of Pennsylvania farmers and consumers will be protected under the States/Provinces Agricultural Accord.

"There is a tremendous amount of movement of food animals between the United States, Canada and Mexico," Wolff said, "and the Accord will help us address our concerns and develop better methods to identify animals and their country of origin."

Wolff participated in the 1993 Accord meeting in Durham, New Hampshire recently as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA).

The meeting marked the seventh annual Accord meeting between agricultural leaders from the USA and Canada.

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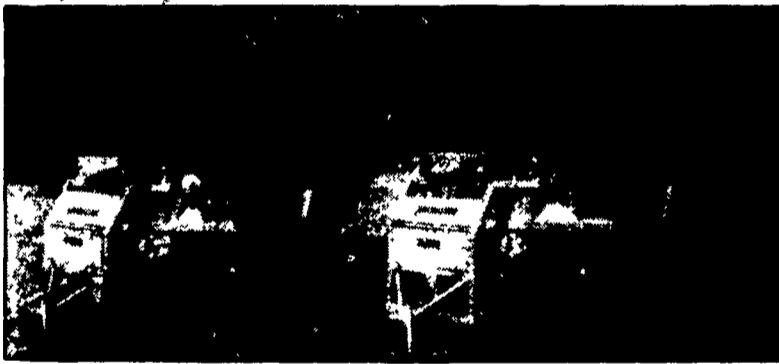
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