

Farm Work Can Be Dangerous If You're Parched

MARSHFIELD, Wis. — Often, farm and other outdoor work needs to be done no matter how hot it is. So in 90-degree heat, preventing dehydration is especially important.

"Farmers won't let animals overheat," said National Farm Medicine Center Medical Director Dean Stueland, M.D. "But sometimes they don't realize they need to take care of themselves, too. Preventing heat exhaustion isn't rocket science. But farmers get busy, neglect themselves, and problems result."

Marshfield Clinic's emergency medicine specialists have already seen several cases of heat exhaustion. It isn't a minor problem. It

often takes two to three days to recover from severe exhaustion, Stueland said.

Farmers and others working outdoors should keep fluids close at hand and drink small amounts, up to a pint, frequently. Water isn't the best fluid replacement for those out in the heat for long periods, Stueland said. He recommends sports drinks that contain no more than 8 percent carbohydrates or pure fruit juice mixed with an equal volume of water. Avoid alcohol, carbonated beverages, and drinks that are high in caffeine. Thirst isn't the best gauge of when to drink — when the body loses large volumes of water, the thirst mechanism isn't

always reliable.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Increased body temperature and abnormally elevated heart rate.
- Impaired performance, loss of energy, weakness, and increased fatigue.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Headache and lightheadedness.

• Decreased urine output and dark-colored urine.

If symptoms of dehydration or heat exhaustion appear, farmers should take a rest in a shady, breezy spot and drink cool fluids, Stueland suggested. Applying ice or drinking extremely cold liquids can make the symptoms worse. Even after symptoms pass, farmers should drink plenty of fluids for a day or two. Children under

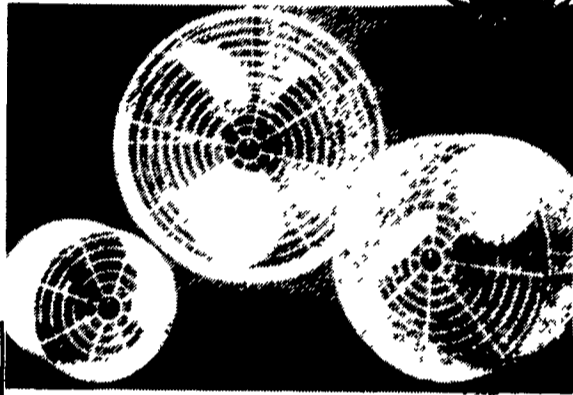
12 and adults over 65 are more at risk of heat exhaustion.

Certain activities can be dangerous in high heat. For example, people should take short shifts working the hay loft because ventilation is likely to be poor, Stueland said. If signs of heat exhaustion appear while farmers are using equipment, they should stop immediately before an accident occurs.

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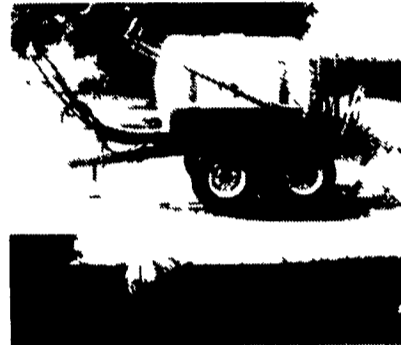
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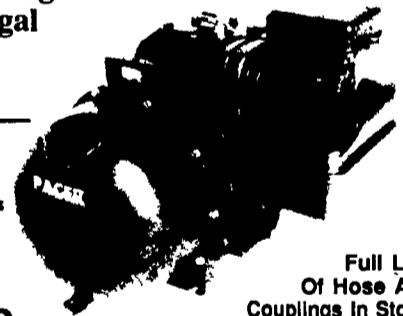


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