

Summer Heat Requires Extra Care In Livestock Handling

BOWLING GREEN, Ky.—The temperature and humidity are in a race to reach triple digits, and your air conditioner is working overtime. You wouldn't dare go outside in such weather for more than a few minutes, and even then you drink plenty of fluids.

All too often, though, such precautions aren't heeded by those who handle livestock. The results can be devastating, even deadly, for livestock during the hot, humid summer months.

"This is the critical time of the year for transporting livestock," said Glenn Slack, executive director of the Bowling Green, Ky.-based Livestock Conservation Institute (LCI). "Common-sense procedures should be followed in reducing the risk factors relating to moving animals in extreme temperatures."

According to "Livestock Trucking Guide," a Livestock Conservation Institute (LCI) publication authored by Dr. Temple Grandin of Colorado State University, each year 80,000 hogs leave the farm but never reach

market. Death losses often double on hot, humid days.

Cattle losses aren't as great, but heat and humidity can increase shrinkage (weight loss) and stress, reducing an animal's ability to fight disease and even affecting reproductive performance.

That translates into a dollar-and-cents loss for livestock producers. But it doesn't have to, explains Grandin, a member of LCI's board of directors. She says some common-sense precautions can help livestock producers avoid the deadly consequences of heat and humidity.

Among Grandin's hot-weather tips:

- During hot weather, livestock should be hauled at night or early morning.

- Instead of straw, use wet sand or wet shavings for bedding.

- Remove grain slats from farm trucks to provide more ventilation. Also, open nose vents for ventilation.

- Load and unload promptly. Heat will build up rapidly inside a stationary vehicle.

- Transport 10-to-20 percent fewer animals than normal during hot weather.

- For hogs in particular, sprinkle the animals with water before loading.

But, cautions Grandin, don't pour cold water on an overheated hog.

"That's one thing you have to be careful about," Grandin said. "If you throw cold water on an overheated hog, it can shock its system."

Grandin emphasizes that all these precautions are particularly important for hogs because they don't have functioning sweat glands.

"Pigs don't sweat," she said. "It's sort of like wearing a diver's wet suit all the time. You can imagine what that would be like."

To help livestock producers and transporters understand the dangers of heat, LCI has produced a Livestock Weather Safety Index

which breaks down the heat-and-humidity levels into three categories: alert, danger and emergency. When the index reaches the emergency zone, producers should postpone hog shipments until the weather moderates.

In addition to the Livestock Weather Safety Index, LCI has produced three publications—"Livestock Handling Guide,"

"Livestock Trucking Guide," and "Handling Pigs"—which address the dangers of heat and humidity. LCI also offers videos on the proper handling and transportation procedures for swine and beef and dairy cattle. For more information about these educational resources, call LCI at (502) 782-9798.

Dairy Picnic July 16

WARFORDSBURG (Fulton Co.)—The Mason-Dixon Red and White Dairy Cattle Association will be holding its 2nd annual picnic on Sunday, July 16, at 1 p.m. by Jack and Vicki King here at Medovue Farm.

Hot dogs, hamburgers, steamed crabs (if available), drinks, and

paper goods will be provided. Each family is to bring a covered dish.

A tour of the National Red and White Dairy Cattle Association offices in nearby Crystal Springs will follow the picnic.

All members and interested families are invited.

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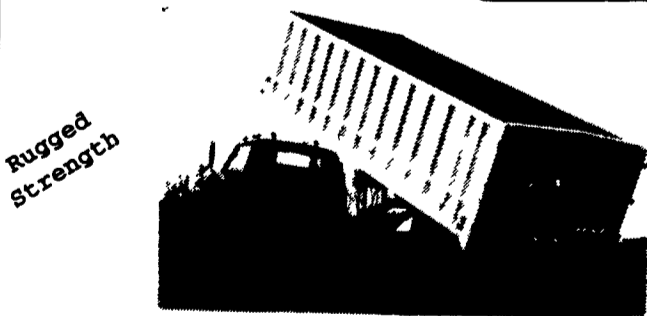
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