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## **Keep Livestock Cool at the Fair**

All critters experience heat stress, which occurs when the body cannot get rid of excessive heat. Animals accumulate heat during the day, then dissipate the heat load at night, when it's cooler. Some animals, including humans, cool by sweating or other means. Cattle, swine, sheep and goats struggle with the ability to sweat.

To keep cool in pasture settings, livestock will crowd into shaded areas. By standing, rather than laying down, airflow is increased. But counter-productively, they'll end up using one another if there's not enough shade.

Heat stressed animals will spend more time in or around water. Beginning signs are panting and excessive salivation. If the stress continues, feed intake will drop. Other factors that affect dissipation of heat are hair thickness and color and past health issues.

Plan heat stress mitigation around livestock comfort. Stalls or barns should have plenty of ventilation. Locate wash areas where the humidity will not affect resting areas. Complete chores and animal workouts before the heat really sets in; 10 a.m. or so. In free stalls, use shavings to bed the pens to keep the ground cool. Use sprinklers with large water droplets to cool animals rather than small, misting drops that increase humidity levels.

As temperatures go from 70 to 90° F, water requirements double. Allow free access to water, use electrolytes to encourage drinking. Prevent messy pens with proper bedding and secure water buckets.

Transport stock when they're well hydrated and during cooler parts of the day. Avoid crowding animals into the trailer. Load and unload promptly. Trailers and show barns at the fairgrounds should have plenty of air movement. Stalls that are in the sun for part of the day need shade coverings that won't stop air flow.

Stall or pen animals in a way that ensures plenty of air flow. Use durable, high velocity fans in accordance with facility rules. Provide plastic bottles of ice for some species, like pigs and rabbits. Feed the majority of the animal's ration during the coolest time of day to avoid the spike in body temperature due to digestion. Concentrates, like corn, contribute less digestion heat than hay.

Show stock can be cooled by running lukewarm to cool water on the belly from fore to rear flank area. Extreme cold water could shock the animal. Don't create any additional tension for an animal experiencing heat stress.

There are four weather conditions that contribute to heat stress; high temperatures and humidity, slow wind speeds and increased solar radiation. The [Kansas Mesonet](#), a network of weather stations across the state, provides an [Animal Comfort Index](#) to help producers and youth monitor care for livestock. The online service is free to the public and can be found at <https://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/animal/forecast/>.

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