



Animals affected by a heat wave

Advice for livestock, lifestyle block, horse and pet owners

Your animals are your responsibility. You need to include them in your planning in the event of an emergency. The following information will help you prepare to ensure the welfare of your animals in a heat wave.

Preparation

Make sure you have adequate feed and water for several days. Your animal may consume three times more water than usual.

Your animal may experience a decrease in appetite. Providing high quality feed will help your animal receive necessary nutrition.

Check you have adequate shade with ventilation provided before the heat wave.

Removal of excess hair or wool may help keep your animal cool.

If your stockwater supply relies on power to pump water to troughs, and you have planned or unplanned power outages, make sure you have a back-up power supply.

Cooling mats can be purchased to help keep your animal cool. For small animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs, frozen water bottles can be added to cages to help keep them cool. Never directly place frozen water on an animal as it may cause extreme temperature change, shock and pain.

Signs of heat stress may include: panting, rapid panting with tongue out, sweating, increased drinking, lack of appetite, a decrease in milk production, a reduction in movement, herds standing in a clump, lowering of head, aggression, change in posture, continual shade seeking, prolonged time at water source, open beak panting, holding wings out, lying outstretched, dry nose, weakness, muscle tremors, salivation, hysteria, collapse and a swollen abdomen.

If your animal has a pre-existing medical condition (e.g. heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, respiratory disease or previous heat injury) pay extra attention as this may affect their ability to regulate their body temperature.

Breeds of animals with a shortened nose (brachycephalic dogs) such as a pug or Persian cat, cannot regulate their body temperature well and are susceptible to heat stress.

Take extra precaution for animals with bare skin, short coats or no pigment in their skin such as nose, ears and stomach as they are more susceptible to sunburn.

Animals with pink skin lack pigment therefore they burn and are susceptible to skin cancer.

Young, pregnant or lactating animals may be more susceptible to heat stress so extra care should be taken in monitoring them. Breed, age, sex and fleece may affect your animal's ability to withstand heat changes and special attention should be given to ensure your animal is coping in a heat wave.



See full First Aid Kit
checklist [here](#).



Containing livestock

Contain livestock in paddocks where there is adequate shade for every animal.

Do not contain livestock in confined spaces such as sheds or yards where there is little shade or air flow.

In a heat wave, rivers or ponds may no longer be able to sustain your livestock's water needs. Check that the water supply is still drinkable.

Low dams or ponds may be surrounded by mud or sludge. Fencing off these areas will prevent animals from potentially becoming entrapped.

Safe shelter

Never leave your animal restrained in direct sunlight.

Always check there is fresh air flow and water available.

A fan can be used to help increase airflow.

If possible avoid metal cages as they may become too hot.

Shade cloth can be used provide additional shelter from the sun.

Move shelters such as dog houses or cages out of direct sunlight and regularly check them.

Sprinklers can be used in milking sheds to help cool cattle. See DairyNZ website for advice: <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/cow-health/heat-stress>

Exercise

If your animal needs exercise try to do so in the cooler hours of the day (mornings and evenings) and avoid strenuous exercise which may cause strain and exhaustion. Make sure your animal always has access to water. If you think your animal is showing signs of heat stress stop exercise immediately and seek veterinary advice.

If the surface you're walking on will burn your feet, it will burn your animal's paws. To test if it's a safe temperature, hold the back of your hand on the concrete for three seconds. If you can't hold it there it's too hot for your animal.

Transportation

If possible avoid transporting your animal on hot days or during the hottest part of the day. Never leave an animal in a vehicle or trailer. Ensure there is always adequate ventilation and that your animals are not left in direct sunlight.

For animals such as milking cows, place them in close paddocks to limit walking distances.

Feed and water

Animals experiencing heat stress may exhibit a loss of appetite. Ensure nutrient-rich food is available to keep your animal healthy.

Prioritize feeding to high priority animals - high value stock or vulnerable stock (e.g. stock close to giving birth, young stock).

Under regular circumstances most animals need 60ml/kg/24hr to sustain hydration. However on a hot day animals may consume up to three times more water.

Avoid metal bowls as they heat water quickly. Ice cubes can be added to help keep water cool.

Wildfire preparation

Due to extreme temperatures there may be a risk of wildfire. To make sure you are prepared for the potential hazards and risks, see the Fire factsheet: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/26533>



Support and assistance

If you think an animal is suffering from heat stress contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

For animal welfare advice or assistance contact Ministry for Primary Industries (Animal Welfare) on phone **0800 00 83 33**.

For farmer support, contact the Rural Support Trust on **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)**.

For heat stress advice for cows, see DairyNZ's webpage: <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/animal-health/heat-stress>

Beef+Lamb NZ's Extreme Dry Management Toolkit: <https://beeflambnz.com/news/extreme-dry-management>

If you find a pet animal that needs immediate medical attention, please take it to your local veterinarian or SPCA.

Useful contacts

National Emergency Management Agency – www.civildefence.govt.nz

Local Civil Defence Emergency Management - <http://www.civildefence.govt.nz/find-your-civil-defence-group>

Fire and Emergency Service – Dial **111**

Police - Dial **111**

Rural Support Trust – Phone **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)**

Ministry for Primary Industries (Animal Welfare) – Phone **0800 00 83 33**

Federated Farmers – Phone **0800 FARMING (0800 327 646)**

Local Animal Control – contact your local council.

For more information about preparing and planning for your animals in an emergency, visit www.mpi.govt.nz/animals-in-emergencies

