

Cattle Business in Mississippi – June/July 2018
“Beef Production Strategies” article
Summer Safety

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Growing up, summertime was reserved for hay and as my family’s chance to get caught up on farm chores. With longer, warm days – there was always plenty of time to work on projects. I can recall many mornings getting up early beat the heat so we could fence, then hop on the tractors and work til dark. The evenings were spent in the show barn working calves preparing them for summer preview shows, junior nationals and fall fairs. I never minded summer chores, because I would rather have heat than mud and rather be outside than in a classroom. As good stockmen, we know to take precautions to keep our animals from getting too hot or too stressed, but often times, we forget about taking care of ourselves. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) the sun, heat, ticks, mosquitos, and poisonous plants are all special hazards for summertime work in the south.

There are several ways to protect your skin from the damaging UV rays or the sun. OSHA recommends lessening the amount of skin exposed by wearing loose fitting long sleeved shirts and pants. I would add that gloves are an important part of the summer wardrobe as we often don’t seem to think about how much sun exposure our hands get. If you are like me, you hate the idea of applying a sunscreen, but in reality we should make a conscious effort to do so. According to skincancer.org, people should use a sunscreen with an SPF between 30 & 50. Skin cancer researchers suggest looking for those that provide protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before going outside and re-applied every two hours. UV rays are most intense between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm.

A side product of the sun’s UV rays is heat. There are three primary heat-related conditions that everyone needs to be aware of: heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Heat cramps are generally the first sign that your body is having trouble handling the heat. One of the keys ways to avoid cramps and over-heating is to stay hydrated. OSHA recommends drinking small amounts of water (8-9 ounces) every 15-20 minutes. If you start to feel light headed or dizzy, it is probably best to go indoors and cool down. Every year, I hear of at least one farmer who suffers from a heat stroke.

Besides being annoying, ticks and mosquitos are carriers of agents that cause disease. Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted fever are the two most common disease states caused by ticks. It is recommended to tuck pant legs into socks or boots to avoid ticks. If you find a tick attached to your skin, OSHA recommends removing it with fine-tipped tweezers. To repel mosquitoes apply Picaridin or any insect repellent with DEET to exposed skin and clothing.

When cattlemen think about safety, we often only think about the things like PTOs that can cause immediate injury. However, we should all be aware of environmental factors that can impact our health. Luckily, taking precautions of wearing loose fitting long-sleeved, light colored shirts, pants, and boots reduce complications from sun, heat, insect and poison plant exposure. For more information on any topics discussed in this article visit: www.osha.gov. Stay safe this summer!

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For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service or visit extension.msstate.edu/beef.