

Work environment – Horticulture safety package

Heat stress >

This bulletin outlines some simple safety guidelines for those working in the horticultural industry and is one of a series on Horticultural Industry Safety.

A worker may **develop heat stress** if their body's **cooling process** cannot cope with the heat load **generated**.

When sweat evaporates the body is cooled and over heating is reduced.

For sweating to work effectively, workers must drink enough fluid to replace the moisture lost otherwise dehydration may occur.

When evaporation is reduced the body temperature increases, which may cause heat stress.

Reasons for lack of sweating include

- worker becomes too dehydrated to sweat
- clothing is too tight
- humidity is very high
- there is no air flow

Heat stress can also develop if the environment is simply too hot (eg. a very hot day on the block).

Workers are more at risk of being affected by heat if they

- are overweight
- have a hangover
- are unfit
- are taking **antihistamines**
- are not used to working in heat
- are taking medicines for heart disease
- are generally unwell



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What are the symptoms of heat stress?

Symptoms of mild heat stress are:

- feeling tired and weak
- muscle cramps
- feel sick or vomiting.

More severe symptoms are:

- headache
- rapid pulse
- sweat a lot
- feeling irritable or confused
- blurred vision.

Heat stress that progresses further can lead to unconsciousness and death.

To reduce the risk of heat stress workers should:

- wear light coloured loose fitting clothing of close weave material (to keep out ultra violet rays) and a brimmed hat
- drink plenty of water (at least 2 glasses full an hour)
- take regular breaks in the shade- particularly if doing heavy work or new to working in the heat
- be closely monitored by management when wearing non porous clothing (e.g. plastic suits when spraying chemicals)
- inform a supervisor if they have a fever, heart condition, diabetes and are taking medication for these ailments and/or taking antihistamines
- **stop work and contact a supervisor if they or any co-worker is showing signs of heat stress**

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