

Regional Heatwave Resilience Project

Building community preparedness



NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

TARGET AUDIENCE – RURAL & ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

Stage 1 Messages: General Community Awareness

These messages seek to raise general community awareness of heatwave / extreme heat impacts and preparedness and would be issued periodically during the lead up to and during summer.

Beat the Heat this Summer!

Many of us simply don't realise that extreme heat is a major cause of health problems every year in Australia, with heatwaves causing more hospitalisations and deaths than any other natural disaster.

In addition to heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, heatwaves can seriously worsen existing health conditions including cardiac disease, mental health and behavioural disorders, asthma and obstructive lung conditions.

This summer, it is time we all started to take heat related illness seriously.

People in rural communities can be especially at risk due to their distance from health services and the often physical, outdoor nature of their work.

There are four important actions everyone can take to protect themselves against heat related illnesses, like dehydration, heat stroke and heat cramps.

1. **Drink plenty of water** and avoid alcoholic, hot or sugary drinks
2. **Keep Cool** – do less and avoid being outside during the hottest part of the day
3. **Check on** elderly friends, neighbours and relatives, especially if they live alone
4. **Have a Plan** for how to stay cool when it heats up

For those living in rural or isolated communities additional steps can also include:

- Plan your work and chores for cooler days and the coolest times of the day.
- Plan to keep livestock cool, fed and in the shade
- Have a back up plan for if you lose power or water during a heatwave
- Stock up on food and water for people and livestock so you don't have to go out during the heat
- Check your medications are stored correctly, usually below 25 degrees Celsius or in the fridge
- Speak to your doctor about any affects medications may have on you during hot weather.



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It is also vital to know the early signs of heat related illness:

- dizziness, fainting
- tiredness
- thirst
- bright or dark yellow urine.

If you or others experience any of these symptoms take steps to prevent it reaching dangerous levels. Move somewhere cool, drink water or diluted fruit juice (1 part juice in 4 parts water). Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol. If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice.

To find out more about ways to beat the heat and be prepared during a heatwave visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat



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