SUMMER AG SAFETY SERIES

WEATHER SAFETY WHILE FARMING

When you work outdoors, you have to be prepared for all kinds of weather — and when you're a farmer, you need to be extra cautious so that you don't injure yourself. Here's a guide from the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health to keeping safe while farming in both cold and hot weather.

[H2] Cold weather

The most common cold-weather illnesses and injuries include frostbite, trench foot and general hypothermia.

[H3] Frostbite

Frostbite is when your skin tissue freezes and causes cell damage. Symptoms include:

- Tingling, stinging, aching feeling
- Uncomfortable sensations of coldness
- The area looks white and is cold to the touch, then feels warm and has redness and swelling
- Numbness

If you or someone else experiences frostbite, move them to a warm area and treat the skin with warm water. Avoid rubbing the area, and bring them to the emergency room.

[H3] Trench foot

Trench foot is vascular damage that occurs when you have continuous exposure to wet and cold environments. Symptoms include:

- Tingling or itching sensation
- Pain
- Swelling
- Blisters
- Bleeding
- Tissue death

To treat trench foot, move the victim to a warm area, treat the skin with warm water and head to the emergency room right away.

[H3] General hypothermia

General hypothermia is when a person loses too much body heat when they're in the cold. It most often occurs in air temperatures between 30 F and 50 F. Symptoms include:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Feeling of cold
- Confusion
- Carelessness
- Disorientation

To treat hypothermia, move the victim to a warm area, remove their wet clothing, offer them warm drinks and wrap them in warm blankets. Bring them to the emergency room as soon as possible.

[H2] Sun and hot weather

There are two major dangers when it's warm and sunny: You could suffer from heat illness, or you could experience major skin damage from the sun.

[H3] Heat illness

Heat exhaustion can start with heat cramps, which feel like painful muscle spasms and involve heavy sweating. If you experience this, apply pressure to the muscles and sip cool water. This may help you avoid heat exhaustion, for which symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Thirst
- Heavy sweating
- Nausea
- Weakness

Heat exhaustion, in turn, can lead to heat stroke, for which symptoms include:

- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Becoming unconscious

With either of these conditions, move the person to a cool area, loosen their clothing and have them sip cool water. If they show signs of heat exhaustion, call 911.

[H3] Sun protection

Sun exposure is highest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and too much sun can lead to sunburn, skin cancer, aging skin and more. To keep your skin protected:

- Wear wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses.
- Use sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours.
- Try to work outside in the morning, late afternoon and evening as much as possible.

If you follow the above precautions for both cold and hot weather, you can keep yourself healthy enough to continue working and prevent both injury and illness.

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