

## **Tips for Dealing With the Summer Heat and Humidity**

Cowboy activities in the NC summer heat and humidity should be approached with care. The combination of cowboy gear and the heat can create health situations very quickly if one does not take proper precautions. The following are some tips that have been accumulated from the cowboy community on ways to help deal with summer heat. These tips are intended for those individuals that are in generally good health. If you have medical conditions that require special considerations, please consult your physician on your options.

### **Pre Match Day Preparations:**

A day or two before a match, especially multi day matches, make sure you stay very well hydrated. Avoid or at least minimize caffeine laden drinks, coffee and soft drinks being common sources, which accelerate dehydration. Alcohol drinks also hasten dehydration so go easy on those as well.

### **Match Day Actions:**

Dress as light as possible (see suggestions below) and keep yourself hydrated ! Start the intake of water and/or one of the carbohydrate-electrolyte solutions (see suggestions below) early in the day. Smaller amounts of fluids on a more frequent basis works better. You should begin fluid intake before you become thirsty. A well hydrated person should be needing a bathroom break at least every 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Again, avoid the use of caffeine laden drinks and too many of those cold adult beverages after shooting until you have re-hydrated. A word to the wise, on very hot days you will need more than just water to stay properly hydrated – you need to include some form of electrolyte replacement as well.

Use available shade as much as possible – use those gun cart umbrellas or shelters in the berm area. When possible, move those gun carts with good umbrellas up closer to the firing line so those working the firing line can use them. Also take advantage of fans if available. Make sure those performing stage duties are rotated out of the hot locations on a regular basis - everyone on the posse needs to help out so that a few are not bearing the brunt of the heat. Keep an eye on your fellow cowboys/cowgirls and encourage them to take break if they look like they are dragging a bit. Use wet clothes/towels to wipe down the head, face and arms from time to time – this improves the evaporation process which cools you.

Eat lightly during the match activities – smaller frequent snacks are better. Avoid heavy, fatty or hard to digest foods. Liquid snacks such as Ensure work well in these situations – especially those providing some protein. They provide an easy to digest form while helping with hydration as well.

### **Hydration Options:**

- Start with the basic – water. Make sure to include some form of electrolytic replacement along with your water intake.

- Carbohydrate/electrolyte drinks. This would include Gatorade, Powerade, etc. You might also want to consider using Pedialyte which is typically used with infants and children. Pedialyte contains less carbohydrates (sugar) and more electrolytes than the traditional sports drinks. Seems to work better for some folks – especially if you are dealing with balancing insulin levels.
- Other hydration mixes – VITALYTE (formerly Gookinaid) being an example that is popular in some areas of the country (you can order it on-line). It comes in powder form that is mixed with water and is another option that is lower in carbohydrates (sugar) and heavier on electrolytes. Easy to keep some with you – just add to some water and you are good to go. There are others in this category as well.

### **Clothing Considerations:**

- Light weight cotton clothing whenever possible.
- Roll up those sleeves – makes it easier to wipe down with a cool wet towel.
- Consider a cooler hat – something that might offer a bit more ventilation.
- A more recent high tech option is the use of clothing intended to wick moisture (sweat) from the body and keep you cooler. There are a couple of options in this category.
  - The Cooler Cowboy Shirt from J. Hornaday Dry Goods - <http://www.jhornaday.com/> These period correct shirts are made with moisture wicking material. These shirts should be worn by themselves (no under shirt) to be effective in hot water. These shirts are very effective in keeping you dry and cooler. In addition, they are produced in here in NC.
  - Sports shirts including what are referred to as compression shirts. Worn under a light weight period type shirt, these seem to work well for some folks. You can now find these at all of the major sporting good stores. Common brand names – CoolMax and Under Armour. This type of clothing needs to fit fairly snugly on the body to be most effective which some do not like. So one of those options that works for some and not others.

With a little preparation and learning how to manage the effects of the heat and humidity, you can enjoy getting in some summer time cowboy matches. You may also find that some ranges have better options for keeping the shooters out of some of the heat – shelters for the loading and unloading tables, props that offer some shade, trees and power at the berms for running fans. So hope this provides some options to consider during the warmer part of the year. Be careful and hydrate, hydrate, hydrate....