

Heat issues causing stress for man and beast

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Problems associated with heat in Ireland are not what we would usually expect to be talking about.

Over the last few weeks we have had unprecedented hot and dry weather, which can be a significant source of stress on both man and beast.

This came to mind while scanning a small number of dairy heifers one afternoon recently.

We need to be mindful not to have animals penned for too long in the sun and to provide

adequate water and shade in these situations.

Transport of animals is another concern, particularly in the heat of the day. Be aware of opening the vents, avoid overcrowding, provide water and travel early morning or late evening when temperatures are not as high.

Dogs and cats are particularly vulnerable and we have already treated a number of dogs suffering from heat stress. The highest risk is when dogs are left in cars or, in some cases, where dogs get into a car without the owner being aware.

We are also mindful of the potential effects on fertility, particularly in cows. Heat stress can adversely affect fertility in both stock bulls and cows.

We can address this to some extent with provision of water and shade. But be also mindful of the potential shortfall in energy supply as grass availability dries up.

Concentrate supplementation may be necessary for both dairy and suckler cows.

Farmers are trying to leave animals in fields with shade available from the sun.

We have just recently got out

of one fodder crisis and now we are facing into another one.

Slow growth

Farmers are starting to feed 2018 silage, there is slow growth for second-cut silage and a lot of hay is visible around the country.

Generally, hay does not yield as well as silage and has a lower energy value. It will be worth putting an effort into planning for the next 12 months to try to avoid falling short later. Feeding meal now, planning for a later housing date, reducing numbers of cattle and early

purchase of fodder are all part of a plan that can help.

Contact your own vet to make a plan on how to manage this stress and plan for providing feed over the coming weeks and also into next winter.

Donal Lynch owns and runs Donal Lynch Veterinary, Tullamore, Co Offaly. Donal Lynch Veterinary is part of XLVets. XLVets is a group of progressive practices who are working together to achieve a better future for agriculture and veterinary in Ireland. Visit www.xlvets.ie.