



Highland Cattle Extreme Heat Care Guide

Gypsy Rose Farm • Blue Rock, Ohio

Practical information for helping Highland cattle stay healthy during periods of extreme summer heat.

Why Heat Matters

Highland cattle are built for cold weather. Their long hair and dense undercoat insulate them extremely well during winter, but those same traits make it harder for them to cool themselves during prolonged periods of high heat and humidity. While Highlands tolerate cold exceptionally well, they require extra attention during summer heat waves.

Provide Plenty of Fresh Water

Fresh, clean water is the single most important factor in preventing heat stress. Mature cattle may consume 30–50 gallons of water each day during extreme heat. Check tanks several times daily, remove algae, keep floats working properly, and ensure timid animals can easily access water.

Shade & Airflow

Natural tree shade is ideal, but portable shade structures or loafing sheds work well too. Good airflow is just as important as shade. Avoid overcrowding around water or shade areas, and if cattle are housed indoors, maximize ventilation with open sides or fans.

Feed in the Evening

Digestion creates heat inside the rumen. Feeding grain or higher-energy rations in the evening allows cattle to generate that metabolic heat during the cooler overnight hours rather than during the hottest part of the day. Continue providing quality forage and free-choice minerals.

Reduce Stress

Avoid transporting, vaccinating, sorting, or working cattle during peak afternoon temperatures. If handling is necessary, schedule it early in the morning before temperatures climb.

Watch for Heat Stress

Early signs include increased breathing, panting, excessive salivation, seeking shade, standing instead of lying down, reduced appetite, and lethargy. Severe signs include open-mouth breathing, inability to stand, collapse, or seizures. Contact your veterinarian immediately if severe symptoms occur.

Recommended Products

- Free-choice loose cattle mineral
- Plain white salt
- Livestock electrolyte supplement (used according to label directions)
- Large stock tanks or automatic waterers
- Fly tags, pour-ons, dust bags or back rubbers
- Portable shade structures where trees are limited

From Our Farm

During extreme heat, we make a point to check water several times a day, feed grain in the evening, leave the herd alone during the hottest part of the afternoon, and walk the pasture in the evening to make sure everyone is doing well. A few extra minutes spent observing your cattle can often prevent a serious problem.

Emergency Heat Stress Checklist

- Move animal to shade immediately.
- Provide unlimited cool, clean water.
- Reduce handling and stress.
- Increase airflow if possible.
- Monitor breathing every few minutes.
- Wet legs and lower body with cool (not ice-cold) water if needed.
- Contact a veterinarian if open-mouth breathing, collapse, inability to stand, seizures, or no improvement within 15–20 minutes.

Daily Heat Wave Checklist

- Check and refill all water tanks.
- Inspect shade areas.
- Check mineral feeders.
- Observe calves, bulls, and older cattle closely.
- Feed grain during the evening.
- Walk the herd before dark and observe breathing and behavior.

This guide is intended for educational purposes and should not replace advice from your veterinarian.