

Cooling Down In Very Hot Weather

Evaporation is everything

By: James R. Davis

Riding when the temperature is well in excess of 90 degrees can be dangerous to your health. Unless you take care to keep your body temperature under control even rides as short as an hour can result in heat-prostration or even sun-stroke.

Many riders know that if you keep your neck cool, because the large veins that feed your brain are so close to the surface, you greatly diminish these health risks. There are two very popular devices that are simple and effective in this regard.

One is called a 'cool collar' and is made from a tube of bandana material that contains some water absorbing beads sewn into it. The beads increase in size about 50 TIMES over when they are dry. Thus, when dry, these collars store easily and take up very little room. But getting them wet is not as easy as it sounds. That is, you have to take a dry collar and submerge it in water for up to 1 hour before it has absorbed all the water it can. That hour is often not available to you when you need it.

The reason the collar works to cool you off is that it takes even longer for the beads to dry out than it did to get them wet. That is, water will evaporate from them over a several hour period. Any evaporation activity cools - but only marginally so from the wearer's point of view. That is, within half an hour of putting one of these collars around your neck, even if it had been in a freezer before you put it on, the collar will be very nearly at the temperature of the air around it.

Far better than these 'cool collars', I have found, is the original design of them (sometimes called 'Kool Kollars'). These are usually made of terry-cloth sewn together in such a way as to contain a pocket into which a zip-lock bag is placed. These are filled with ice! This type of collar REALLY cools your neck as the ice melts, AND they drip cool water. That dripping leaves the front and back of your shirt sopping wet over time which provides a huge source of evaporation - i.e., it helps to COOL!

At every pit stop you make you can refill the 'Kollar' with ice (just pour in a glass of ice water, ice and all).

The bead filled collar cannot be rapidly cooled again once it has gotten warm. Thus, you usually find that people that use them have two - one of which is always sitting in an ice-chest.

One more way to handle high heat - those of you that wear skull-caps (helmet liners) can simply saturate them with water before putting them on. This works very well indeed, for about half an hour.

Further, of course, simply pouring water on your shirt helps a great deal - again, because it provides a huge area over which evaporation takes place.

While on the subject let me remind you that your wet shirt is not the only large area that evaporates - all of your exposed skin does the same. Thus, you NEED to DRINK lots of fluids too!!!

I thought this was an appropriate article for the temperatures we are seeing right now. Becky and I use a cooling shirt system.

Some of you know what I'm referring to. We use a 5-gallon Igloo cooler, 12Vdc sump pump, some tubing connected to the shirt. We have a switch located above the front brake reservoir to operate the pump as needed. It circulates ice water through the shirt and back to the cooler.

I know of other cooling systems that use a smaller ice cooler and a vest that does the same thing.

Cover your skin to keep the sun off. Use caution when applying sun screen, the last place you want sun screen is in the sweat running down your face over your eyes while riding.

The chapter rides are rare right now. It seems Louisiana is continuing the Phase 2 plan for another 28 days. In a few weeks this will be revisited. Becky and I do not want anyone to feel like they need to participate in the rides. Keep yourself safe and do what you need to do.

Ride Safe, Ride Smart

Mike and Becky