Intercomparison of seven Temperature-Humidity Index (THI) equations for assessing the impact of heat stress in relation to milk production to find out best THI for central zone of Kerala

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ABSTRACT. Heat stress experienced by cattle can be quantified using Temperature Humidity Index (THI). Seven different THI developed by different scientists all over the world were compared in this study to find out best THI for assessing the influence of heat stress in relation to milk production for central zone of Kerala. The dry bulb, wet bulb, average relative humidity and temperature were used to estimate the THI. The daily data of wet bulb, dry bulb, maximum and minimum temperature, forenoon and afternoon relative humidity and average relative humidity during the period of 2013-2017 were collected from principal agro meteorological observatory, Vellanikkara and daily values were converted into monthly average values. Using these data THI was calculated using seven equations for four seasons. The standard method of IMD was followed to group months into seasons, i.e., winter (January-February), pre monsoon (March-May), south west monsoon (Jun-Sep) and post monsoon (Oct-December). Annual and seasonal mean values of each THI equations were calculated and compared. If seasonal mean value exceeded annual mean value of THI, such seasons were considered as the season of heat stress. Daily milk yield data of seven Holstein-Friesian cows after second calving were collected from university farm, Vellanikkara and monthly average milk yield was calculated. Results showed that seasonal average value exceeded annual average value of THI only during pre monsoon season. Calculated THI values for pre monsoon season were correlated with milk yield and THI having highest $R^2$ was selected as the best THI. THI developed by NRC, 1971 showed maximum $R^2$ value hence found to be most suitable equation to assess the heat stress during pre monsoon season. The equation is given as follows:

$$\text{THI}_1 = (1.8 \times T_{db} + 32) - [(0.55 - 0.0055 \times \text{RH}) \times (1.8 \times T_{db} - 26.8)] (R^2 = 0.1711) \quad \text{(NRC, 1971).}$$

Key words – Temperature humidity index, Heat stress, Pre monsoon season.
1. Introduction

Dairy cattle in tropical humid provinces are subjected to high ambient temperature and relative humidity. Kerala is a tropical humid state in India. Elevated temperature and relative humidity may cause heat stress on animal and may reduce the milk yield. High temperature, solar radiation and relative humidity for long periods compromise the capacity of the lactating cow to dissolve heat, to deal with it; the cow develops many physiological mechanisms. In this condition the animal has to compromise on the energy, which should be used for milk production in order to maintain homeostasis. These responses have a negative consequence on milk performance. Temperature Humidity Index is used to quantify heat stress. THI depicts the combined effects of air temperature and humidity related with the degree of heat stress. To regulate and reduce the heat stress associated losses in milk production, THI can be used as a weather safety index (Bohmanova et al., 2007). Many THI equations relating various environmental factors to quantify the degree of heat stress have been offered. Majority of the equations focuses on temperature and relative humidity. Threshold value of THI is different for different equations and it differs with locations. When THI exceeds the threshold level, it leads to heat stress. The thermal stress on lactating cross breed cattle was assessed by Pramod et al. (2021) using THI at Thiruvizhamkunnu, located in the central zone of Kerala. According to them the values of THI varied between 70.78 and 83.93 during the study period (January to March), indicating that the cows were exposed to mild and moderate stress. The regions lies in the central zone experiences a humid and sub-humid climate with an average rainfall of 2171 mm per year (Premakumar et al., 2015). Influence of heat stress on livestock production is lightened by heat abatement systems like sprinkler and fan. When the water is sprayed to the animal the heat required for evaporation is lost from its body, this evaporative cooling reduces the body temperature and there by heat stress. Armstrong (1994) testified that by evaporative cooling, 7.5 kg extra milk per day was produced by cow when the temperature was 40.5°C (RH less than 30%). The objective of current study was to recognize most suitable THI among seven different THI for assessing impact of heat stress in relation to milk production in central zone of Kerala.

2. Data and methodology

Weather data including wet bulb temperature ($T_{wb}$), dry bulb temperature ($T_{db}$) maximum ($T_{max}$) and minimum temperature ($T_{min}$), relative humidity (RH) were collected from the principal agro meteorological observatory, Vellanikkara, located at 10° 31' N, 76° 13'E, located at an altitude of 22 m from mean sea level, for the period of 2013-2017. The region experiences a mild to moderate humid climate. Daily average temperature ($T_a$) was calculated by taking mean of $T_{max}$ and $T_{min}$. Milk yield data for the period of 2013-2017 were collected from seven Holstein- Friesian cross cows after second calving from university farm, KAU, Vellanikkara and wet average was calculated.

\[
\text{Wet average} = \frac{\text{Milk yield at peak lactation period}}{\text{Number of cows}}
\]

Seven Temperature Humidity Indices (THI) were calculated from the weather data using following equations.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{THI} 1 &= (1.8 \times T_{db} + 32) - [(0.55 - 0.0055 \times \text{RH}) \times (1.8 \times T_{db} - 26.8)] \text{ (NRC, 1971)} \\
\text{THI} 2 &= (0.35 \times T_{db} + 0.65 \times T_{wb}) \times 1.8 + 32 \text{ (Bianca, 1962)} \\
\text{THI} 3 &= (0.15 \times T_{db} + 0.85 \times T_{wb}) \times 1.8 + 32 \text{ (Bianca, 1962)} \\
\text{THI} 4 &= [0.4 \times (T_{db} - T_{wb})] \times 1.8 + 32 + 15 \text{ (Thom, 1959)} \\
\text{THI} 5 &= (T_{db} + T_{wb}) \times 0.72 + 40.6 \text{ (NRC, 1971)} \\
\text{THI} 6 &= (0.8 \times T_{db}) + [\text{RH}/100] \times (T_{db} - 14.4) + 46.4 \text{ (Mader et al., 2006)} \\
\text{THI} 7 &= 1.8T_a(1\text{RH}) (T_a14.3)+32 \text{ (Kibler, 1964)}
\end{align*}
\]

Temperatures were in degree Celsius (°C) for calculation of all equations.

Monthly average value of each THI as well as milk yield were calculated and arranged into four different seasons. The monthly values were grouped into different seasons by following standard methods of IMD, i.e., winter (January-February), pre monsoon (Mar-May), south west monsoon (June-September) and post monsoon (October-December). Annual and seasonal average values of THI using each equations were calculated. A comparison was done between annual average THI values and seasonal average THI values. The annual average value for THI was considered as the thermo neutral zone value. If the seasonal average value exceeded annual average value of THI such seasons were considered as a period of heat stress. If the seasonal average value was below the annual average value such seasons were considered as period of no heat stress. Correlation was
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather parameters</th>
<th>Pre-monsoon</th>
<th>SW Monsoon</th>
<th>Post-monsoon</th>
<th>Winter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dry bulb temperature (°C)</td>
<td>34.06</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>30.44</td>
<td>32.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet bulb temperature (°C)</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>25.36</td>
<td>22.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative humidity (%)</td>
<td>73.04</td>
<td>83.79</td>
<td>74.47</td>
<td>58.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum temperature (°C)</td>
<td>36.90</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>34.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum temperature (°C)</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>23.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature range (°C)</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of maximum temperature (°C)</td>
<td>43.1 - 33.7</td>
<td>31.9 - 28.4</td>
<td>33.0 - 31.4</td>
<td>35.6 - 32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of minimum temperature (°C)</td>
<td>26.9 - 24.2</td>
<td>24.4 - 21.6</td>
<td>24.4 - 21.1</td>
<td>23.9 - 22.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

carried out by drawing scatter diagrams. Scatter diagrams showing relationship between milk yield and THI values were drawn for all the seasons by taking THI values along the X axis and milk yield values along the Y axis. Suitable THI equations for the seasons experiencing heat stress was found out from the scatter diagram by comparing the $R^2$ values. THI equation showing highest $R^2$ value was selected as the best one.

3. Results and discussion

THI values were calculated using seven THI equations for four meteorological seasons. The annual average values of THI using seven equations were also calculated. The annual average value calculated by seven equations (THI1 to THI7) was 81.8, 80.8, 80.8, 86.8, 81.1, 81.7 and 78.2. THI index calculated using seven equations for pre monsoon period were 84.5, 84.0, 83.2, 90.4, 84.0, 85.7 and 80.6. THI index calculated for south west monsoon season were 80.9, 80.1, 80.5, 85.2, 80.0, 81.0 and 77.83. THI values calculated for post monsoon season were 81.7, 79.9, 80.7, 86.7, 80.1, 79.7 and 77.5. THI calculated for winter season were 80.7, 78.8, 77.9, 86.1, 80.8, 81.4 and 77.0. The annual average value of THI calculated by each equation was considered as the thermo neutral zone value. To assess the heat stress, the annual average value was compared with the seasonal average value of THI during all the four seasons. The results revealed that the seasonal average values calculated by all the seven equations exceeded annual average value only during pre monsoon season (Fig. 1). Hence pre monsoon season can be considered as the period of heat stress in central zone of Kerala during the experimental period. Season wise average weather parameters observed during the experimental period is described in the Table 1. Maximum value of $T_{db}$ was 34.06 °C during pre monsoon period, 29.76 °C during south west monsoon, 30.4 °C during post monsoon season and 32.46 °C during winter season. $T_{wb}$ recorded was 26.19 °C during pre monsoon period, 25.22 °C during south west monsoon, 25.36 °C during post monsoon and 22.64 °C during winter season. $T_{max}$ recorded was 36.90 °C during pre monsoon season, 30.4 °C during south west monsoon, 32.10 °C during post monsoon and 34.11 °C during winter season. $T_{min}$ recorded was 25.5 °C during pre monsoon season, 23.3 °C during south west monsoon, 22.7 °C during post monsoon and 23 °C during winter. Temperature range recorded during the period was 16.2 °C during pre monsoon period, 7.6 °C during south west monsoon, 8.6 °C during post monsoon and 11.7 °C during winter season. RH recorded was 73.04% during pre monsoon season, 83.79% during south west monsoon, 74.47% during post monsoon and 58.9% during winter. The temperature values recorded during pre monsoon period was greater than that experienced during other seasons. The relative humidity experienced during pre monsoon season was less than that experienced during south west monsoon season and post monsoon season. According to Pramod et al., 2021, the increase in temperature has more influence in developing heat stress in dairy cattle than relative humidity does. Hence, increased values of $T_{db}$, $T_{wb}$,
$T_{\text{max}}$ and $T_{\text{min}}$ might be the reason for the heat stress experienced during the pre monsoon season. Scatter diagrams were drawn to correlate milk yield and THI values. As per the study conducted by Singh et al. (2019) milk yield was found to be diminished with increase in THI value similar result was seen in this study. Fig. 2 shows the scatter diagrams plotted with THI along X axis and milk yield along Y axis. $R^2$ values obtained from scatter diagrams for equations THI1, THI2, THI3, THI4, THI5, THI6, THI7 were 0.1711, 0.014, 0.0471, 0.0159, 0.0166, 0.0418 and 0.0411 respectively. Compared to all other THI equations THI 1, i.e., THI proposed by NRC, 1971 \( (1.8 \times T_{\text{db}} + 32) - [(0.55 - 0.0055 \times RH) \times (1.8 \times T_{\text{db}} - 26.8)] \) was found to be the best among the seven THI equations since it has the highest value of $R^2$ (0.1711) and shows more correlation between THI and milk yield.

4. Conclusions

Among the four meteorological seasons heat stress was experienced during pre monsoon season (March-May) in central zone of Kerala. THI equations proposed by NRC, 1971 was found to be more suitable for assessing heat stress in relation to milk production during this season. Heat abatement systems like sprinkler and fan can be used during pre monsoon season to alleviate heat stress and related losses in milk production.

Disclaimer

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References