

PRO RIDER

# SUMMER'S HERE!

Words: **Howard Mansell**

**Y**AY! Well, “yay” with some reservations. What do I mean by that? Well, there are quite a lot of downsides to the hot summer weather, and some of them can be deadly, so there are a few things to consider.

## HEAT

I know that’s predictable, but we have to consider this as a risk in many ways. If we don’t have good summer riding gear, we may be tempted to ride with no gloves, unzipped jacket or no jacket at all. We might even consider wearing shorts and jandals (yes, it happens). It’s imperative to stay safe and wear real motorcycle gear even when it’s hot, so we need to consider having summer specific gear.

There is a broad range of ventilated or mesh riding jackets and trousers these days, which have armour and will protect your skin just as well as the winter gear but you won’t feel like you are doing a slow broil while on your bike. It’s not an option to ride without good safety gear, good boots and gloves. Don’t

even consider it. The misery you will suffer if you have an “off” even at a low speed is 1000 times worse than the pain of buying some summer gear. Save your skin.

## WATER

It’s critical that you keep your hydration up. If you become even slightly dehydrated, your concentration will be severely reduced and your reaction times will slow down. It’s essential that you keep hydrated and keep your attention levels high so that you can manage all those hazards that are out there and be able to react quickly to save yourself. Drink a little often – water that is. If you haven’t read about the effects of dehydration, ask Doctor Google.

## THE BIKE

The bike is going to become a heat source that adds to the environmental heat. It’s going to heat you up more, especially if you are in traffic. Be aware of this, sit back on the seat and spread those legs, let the heat rise past you and keep an eye on your temperature gauge. You

might even consider shutting down during long sequences at the lights or in traffic jams.

## THE ROAD

Beware of shiny patches on the road. When it’s wet, they are slippery. When it’s hot, they can be even more slippery because they are really a pool of partially melted tar. Ride onto them in a corner, and you are asking for serious trouble. Some councils such as in the Thames area think that it’s a good idea to use water trucks and wet the tar pools down. This, as one of our fellow riders found out a few years ago on the Kopu hills, simply “freezes” the top surface and leaves the underside liquid. Ride onto that because it looks hard and you’ll be down before you can say “Uh oh”. That was his experience, and the bike was written off.

## FELLOW RIDERS

If you are riding in a group and someone near you seems to be riding erratically, be a mate and get the rider to stop – they are very likely getting dehydrated. They need to get off the bike and



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get some water in before they hurt themselves or someone else. The problem is that by the time they are noticeably dehydrated, it's too late to re-hydrate quickly enough to be ready to ride again that day. They should be counselled to stop for the day and perhaps leave the bike somewhere safe and pillion for the rest of the trip. Impractical you may say, but is it worth dying for? I don't think so. There are sachets of powdered electrolytes that can be added to water which can help a lot, a few will fit in a really small space, and it's worth carrying some with you.

#### YOUR HELMET

If you value your chin, jaw, teeth and nose and you don't want to have small children screaming when they look at you, don't buy an open face

helmet. If you have one now, cut the straps off and throw it in the bin. Seriously.

There are plenty of good full face and flip-top helmets out there these days, and a lot of them have great systems to help you with heat. Ventilation systems that let air flow over and around your head and can be turned on and off with ease, and integrated sun visors mean you can control the brightness if you are riding hills and valleys. Bring it down when you're in the sun, take it up in the shade. Sunglasses and darkened visors can compromise your vision at times, and you are left with the decision to use them or not. Once you are riding, it's almost impossible to take them off, and you'll find yourself riding stretches of road by memory – not good.

#### GLOVES

Got a good mate who will wipe your bum for you every time you take a dump? Didn't think so. Wear gloves. Real motorcycle gloves with wrist straps, so they don't come off when you put your hands out to protect yourself on the way down. There are lots of good, ventilated motorcycle gloves, made for hot conditions. There's no excuse, buy a set of gloves now and wear them when you ride.

So, there you have it. There is no excuse for riding without good gear. If you have an "off" without it, you will get hurt, and you will become another statistic on the ACC list of "Those Who's Levies Should Never Be Reduced."

Think about it.

