



Animal Alert

Protecting Livestock During Severe Winter Weather Commercial producers and youth with animal projects should prepare now for the upcoming severe cold and snowy conditions

Donald A Llewellyn, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Livestock Extension Specialist
WSU Lincoln County Extension
don.llewellyn@wsu.edu
509-725-4171



Environment

- ❖ Windbreaks- to help reduce wind chill
- ❖ Cleanliness-caked mud and dirt reduces the animals ability to insulate their bodies
- ❖ Acclimation-animals that are acclimated to the winter weather conditions will have sufficient coats to tolerate lower temperatures
- ❖ Bedding-important that livestock have clean bedding to keep them dry and warm
- ❖ Foot traction-keep pathways used by you and animals free from ice buildup to prevent injuries
- ❖ Drifting Snow-avoid creek bottoms, swales and other low areas as the snow accumulates
- ❖ Handling- avoid moving livestock or any other activity that requires unnecessary use of energy
- ❖ Barn raised animals-proper heating and ventilation and air flow of barn/sheds



Daily Observation

- ❖ Look for signs of cold stress (shivering, blue membranes)
- ❖ Look for signs respiratory and digestive disorders (heavy breathing, diarrhea, nasal discharge)
- ❖ Have an emergency action plan for severe winter weather
- ❖ Have a current veterinarian client patient relationship (VCPR) to assist with emergency health problems associated with severe weather

Feed

- ❖ In severe winter conditions the nutrient requirements can increase by 40% or more, providing adequate energy and protein is essential to keeping your animals healthy and giving them the ability to tolerate extreme cold
- ❖ Additional feeding times may be required during extreme cold weather
- ❖ Separate thin animals from the herd to allow for increased nutrition
- ❖ In stressful conditions rapid changes in feeds and diets can cause digestive upsets



Animals	Types of Feed	Amount of Water
Cattle	Gradual increase of forages and hay to help maintain an optimal body condition score (BCS) of 5 or 6	Lactating Cows 20-25 gal/day Dry Cows 5-15 gal/day
Horses	High-quality haye (timothy, brome, orchard grass or alfalfa)	10-15 gal/day
Sheep	High-quality forage and hay	Lactating Ewe/Doe 2.5-3 gal/day Dry Ewe/Doe 1-2 gal/day
Swine	High energy, low-fiber diet with a moderate amount of protein	Lactating sow 3-7 gal/day Dry Sow 3-6 gal/day
Chickens	Moderate-protein, high-energy diets such as pelleted or mash feed and calcium for laying hens	1 gal/20 birds
Rabbits	High-quality hay or rabbit pellets	0.1-2.05 gal/day

Water

- ❖ The most important nutrient
- ❖ Animals cannot get enough water from eating snow
- ❖ A continues supply of clean water, free of ice, is essential
- ❖ Without adequate water, efficient utilization of other nutrients cannot be achieved



Become a registered user of the Washington State University AgWeatherNet and have access to the new Cattle Comfort Index to assist in preparation for severe weather events. For details, visit: <https://weather.wsu.edu/>

For more information on feeding livestock in severe winter conditions, to to extension.wsu.edu/lincoln-adams/livestock/ and click on the *Feeding Livestock During and After a Disaster* under the Fact Sheets section