

Cold Weather for Pets and Livestock

When record cold, with ice and snow hit, as part of Animal Emergency Preparedness, animal owners should be aware and ready to protect their pets and livestock and do the proper things to help them through this unusual cold spell. Following are a number of concerns and recommendations:

- Our animals, especially indoor/outdoor pets, probably do not have an adequate winter coat for protection in these very low temperatures.
- Hypothermia and dehydration are the two most probable life-threatening conditions for animals in cold weather.
- Wet conditions and wind-chill add greatly to the cold-stress for animals (and people).
- Pets should be brought inside or into protected covered areas, provided with plenty of bedding and food and drinking water.
- Livestock should be provided with wind-break and roof shelter, and monitored for signs of discomfort (extensive shivering, weakness, lethargy, etc.)
- It is very important that livestock be provided extra hay/forage/feed as up to double the calories for normal body heat maintenance may be needed in extreme cold.
- It is critical that animals have access to drinking water. Usual water sources may freeze solid in low temperatures and dehydration becomes a life-threatening factor. Many of our animals, especially the young, may not know how or be unable to break several inches of ice to reach water. In general, animals tend to drink less in extreme cold, risking dehydration. Research with horses shows horses drink more water if it is warmed during winter weather.
- Adding a warm sloppy bran mash, sloppy moistened beet pulp or soaking pelleted feed in warm water is a good way to add water to your horses' diet and provide some "comfort food" in the cold weather.
- Special attention should be paid to very young and old animals. They may be less able to tolerate temperature extremes and have weaker immune systems.

Many professionals and organizations are available to assist you in recommendations and health care for your animals:

Pet owners should check with their veterinarian, animal control or humane societies for additional tips and assistance.

Horse and livestock owners should check with their veterinarian, the State Veterinarian, or their Agriculture Extension Agent for additional information and assistance.

Please take the extra care to provide for your pets and livestock a cold period.

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