

How to Protect Your Farm Animals From Winter

2014-11-16 07:20:53 By Theresa Crouse

Just like us humans, animals are susceptible to suffer when exposed to extremes in temperature, so they need to be protected.

Regardless of whether it's extreme heat or cold, there are some steps that you need to take in order to [keep your animals alive](#). Since you're going to be relying on your livestock for food and hides, you need to know how to protect your farm animals and chickens from extreme weather.

Water

During extremes in temperature, animals use more energy to either cool down or stay warm. As a result, they will be drinking more water in order to stay hydrated. Make sure that water supplies stay full and that the water stays fresh in order to keep your animals healthy and to keep your milk and eggs coming.

In the winter, freezing is going to be a problem so make sure that your animals have access to water at all times even if you have to go knock holes in the ice throughout the day. Chicken waterers freeze especially fast because they're so small so check them every few hours when the temps are below freezing.

Food

Since your animals are using more energy in extreme weather, they're logically going to need more food to maintain their weight and keep [producing milk](#) and eggs. If it gets extremely cold, you can always make a warm mash for them if you're so inclined. Just like people, hot food warms bellies.

Make sure that your hay is mold-free when you feed it. Cows don't like to eat it with mold and it can literally kill your horse. The easiest way to make sure that your hay remains fresh is to give it plenty of drying time after you cut it but before you bale it, and store it in a cool, dry place.

Shelter

Most cows and horses are pretty hardy but they still need good shelters to protect them from freezing winds and blistering sun. Animals can get sunburn and frostbite just like people can. You don't have to have anything fancy but you DO need to provide something serviceable to protect them.

For your large livestock, a well-built barn is fabulous but if you don't have that, make sure that they at least have a shed or lean-to that they can use to get away from rain, wind, and sun. Chickens usually do OK in the heat, but they need a little extra care in the winter, and enough light to [lay eggs in the winter](#).

Build the coop off the ground and make it as airtight as possible. Make sure that they have plenty of perch space so that they don't fight. They're not big fans of walking in snow so you may want to throw down a tarp or something else that's easy to sweep off so that they have somewhere to walk. Fresh hay in the laying boxes will help keep them warm, too.

Finally, if you have chickens with longer beards or combs, they will be more susceptible to frostbite.

Video first seen on [Spring Chicken Media](#).

Exercise

Animals need exercise just like people do. Chickens won't produce eggs if they're constantly cooped. Horses will start to develop bad habits such as cribbing or weaving if they don't get exercise daily. In a survival situation, you're not going to be keeping coats in show condition so they'll have longer coats to keep them warm. Let them out even if it's only for a couple of hours.

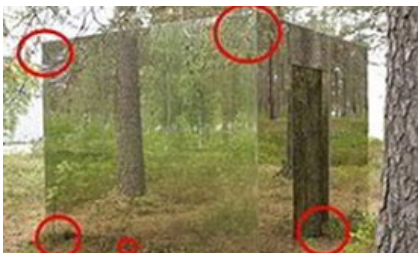
Poaching

We ARE talking about protecting your farm animals and chickens in extreme weather and in a survival situation, when poaching will likely be an issue.

People will be scavenging for food and if your livestock or chicken coop is easily accessible and undefended, you're going to be easy pickin'. Think about that when you build your coop and barns, if possible. Build them so that you can see the doors. Make sure that your fences are strong and in good repair. If you can, bring the herd into a corral at night and lock your barns and chicken coop.

Posting some signs may not be a bad idea if your animals are visible, though they won't keep many people out if they're starving. Still, knowing that the place is being defended may make somebody think twice. A big dog or two in the barns won't hurt, either. Just do the best that you can.

How best to protect your farm animals and chickens in extreme weather is going to depend on how large your herds are, what type of animals you have, and how extreme the weather actually gets. Providing the basics – food, water, shelter, and protection from poachers – will go a long way toward keeping your meat, milk, and egg suppliers safe in a SHTF situation.



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