

Livestock and Cold Temperatures

The weather is calling for some low temperatures over the next few weeks. As we know the weather is not 100% predictable, which is why it is best to be prepared for extreme cold weather during our winter season. Being proactive during the winter months is important for the health of your animals. Access to clean water, ample feed, and a well-maintained shelter, windbreak, or facility are common requirements for all livestock during cold weather.

Access to clean reliable water is vital to any type of livestock, especially during extreme weather. If an animal goes to drink at approximately the same time each morning or afternoon, be sure their water is not frozen when they go to drink. Provide fresh water before it becomes an issue. If you are using any type of heater, be cautious of fires electric shocks, or electrocution of livestock. Some livestock such as goats can be curious and chew on cords. Water is critical to ensure adequate feed intake. If water availability is limited, feed intake will be reduced.

As animals will spend a lot of their energy to stay warm, you must provide plenty of feed that will give them energy. Livestock's maintenance nutritional requirements can increase significantly during cold weather. Requirements increase dramatically if animals become wet and/or there is appreciable wind. Energy can be provided through grain or additional roughage (hay). Roughage is generally preferable due to its feeding safety, lower cost, and greater heat released during digestion. However, if livestock are already consuming their maximum amount of dry matter and/or if forage is low quality, additional nutrients should be provided through concentrated sources. Grain supplementation rates will vary with species. All dietary changes, whether increases or decreases, should be made gradually. This is why it is important to have livestock in ideal body condition before the winter months. Maintaining a healthy fat cover can act as both an insulator and an additional energy reserve for creating body heat.

Shelter is important as animal's energy needs will increase when they are exposed to wind or precipitation during cold weather. Most livestock will need some shelter during the winter months; however, their natural winter coats allow them to endure cold temperatures. Providing shelter or windbreaks that can be easily accessed by animals is key. Ventilation to help with respiration gasses and manure odor is important when building a shelter for livestock. Be sure to check your barn or shelter for proper air circulation to reduce the spread of respiratory infections and other illnesses. If you notice condensation on walls or ceilings, that is a good indication your air isn't ventilating enough for the number of animals occupying the space. Dry bedding provides insulation from the cold ground, helps preserve body heat, and minimizes stress.

Make sure animals are in good body condition and vaccinated. Livestock that are larger and in good body condition can handle winter weather and extreme conditions better than smaller or weaker animals. In general, older, or young livestock will have the hardest time regulating body temperatures as they usually do not have enough body fat to help keep them warm. Cold stress in livestock can lead to devastating losses if you do not ensure that your livestock have the essentials to survive. If you have any questions regarding your livestock during extreme temperatures, feel free to contact the local extension office.

Upcoming Events & Reminders

Interested in signing up for an Agriculture & Natural Resources newsletter? Please send me an email at stoneking.24@osu.edu

Now is the time to be placing orders in seed catalogs for this coming growing season. Items often sell out early.

Save The Dates-

For those needing to take the Pesticide Exam, the exam is given every month at the Ohio Valley Career and Technical Center at 10:00 am. The dates are on the following Wednesdays: February 7th, March 6th, April 10th, and May 1st.

February 13th- Planning A Vegetable Garden Workshop from 6:00-7:30 at the Adams County Fairgrounds. Call or email me to register for this free gardening workshop.

February 20th- GAP Training for Tobacco Producers. This training is from 9:00-11:00 at Raines Farm and Greenhouses. If you plan on attending, please call the office to register at 937-544-2339 or email me at stoneking.24@osu.edu

February 27th- Fertilizer and Pesticide Applicator's Training at the Adam's County Fairgrounds. For those who need to renew, letters have been mailed out with registration information.

March 1st- Cow Calf School at Raines Farm. The focus will be on optimizing herd fertility. The cost to register is \$10.00. This workshop is from 9:00-2:30. Presentation topics include breeding season management, cow longevity, and culling decisions, EPDs in action, synchronization strategies, and bull evaluation. Contact the extension office at 937-544-2339 to register or for any additional information.

March 19th- Starting Seeds Indoors Workshop from 6:00-7:30 at the Adams County Fairgrounds. Call or email me to register for this free gardening workshop.

April 4th- Women in Ag Southern Regional Day Conference in Chillicothe, more details to come.