



COLD WEATHER SAFETY FOR LIVESTOCK

Companion animals aren't the only animals in need of protection during the winter months. Livestock, including horses, have their own unique considerations and needs when the weather gets colder.

Recognize the importance of early veterinary care:

Schedule a veterinary exam early in the season to address any concerns before the harshest conditions arrive. This is a good time to discuss vaccinations, nutritional supplementation, deworming, and other parasite treatment needs. Veterinary attention is especially important for animals that are pregnant, and very young or very old animals may require special attention.

Provide appropriate shelter from the elements:

Livestock can generally tolerate cold temperatures, but wind, rain, or snow will require a greater expenditure of calories. With that in mind, be sure they have a way to get out of the elements, especially the wind. Blankets can help protect horses, but a structural shelter with proper ventilation and dry bedding is the best method of protection. If you do blanket your horses, be sure to check underneath often for signs of injury, infection, or malnutrition.

Consider the amount and quality of feed:

Besides taking shelter, livestock keep warm by expending energy, which means they need to consume enough calories to heat themselves. Consider talking with your veterinarian to develop a feed plan that meets your animals' nutritional needs. This may mean increasing the amount of feed available to your animals, and/or increasing the quality of feed. Very young, very old, or sick animals will typically have additional nutritional needs during the winter compared to healthy, middle-aged animals.

Ensure access to water:

It is crucial that your herd has access to fresh and unfrozen water. Tank heaters or heated buckets can help keep water at a temperature your animals are more comfortable drinking. Livestock will not consume adequate amounts of water if it is near freezing, and consuming enough water is important to your animals' health and well-being in winter months.