

# Winter Tips For Livestock

With winter fast approaching, it is time to prepare your livestock for the upcoming cold season. The following tips can help maximize the performance of your animals this winter:

## Proper Feeding

The main goal of feeding in the winter is to maintain body condition and, in pregnant animals, provide adequate nutrition for the growing fetus. Cattle require 1% more energy from their diet for every degree that is below their (environmental) critical temperature.<sup>1</sup> For beef cattle with a heavy, dry, winter coat, their (environmental) critical temperature is 19° F. The chart below demonstrates the relationship between temperature and energy needs.

Temperature	Extra TDN Needed	Extra Hay (lb./hd/day)	Extra Grain (lb./hd/day)
30° F	0	0	0
10° F	20%	3.5-4	2-2.5

Source: "Caring for Cattle in Cold Weather" Rasby, Dr. Rick, University of Nebraska-Lincoln<sup>2</sup>

## Fresh Water Access

Make sure fresh water is available 24/7. Beef cattle will consume 1 gallon of water per 100 lb. of body weight.<sup>2</sup> Reduced water intake leads to reduced feed consumption which can affect body condition in a negative way. Pay close attention during severe cold weather to prevent water sources from becoming frozen. Ideally, a loose, free choice mineral should be offered in close proximity to the water source for easy access.

## Balanced Nutrition

Good nutrition is key to maximizing the performance of your animals. Taking hay samples and testing the quality of your forages in the fall can help you plan ahead for the winter months. A hay or corn test costs approximately \$19 through Dairyland Labs (see Alex Austin's April 2018 Newsletter article, "Forage Sampling"). Once you obtain sample results,



work with a Crystal Creek® nutritionist to create a supplement strategy that will meet the needs of each group of animals being fed.

## Provide Adequate Shelter

It is important to have a shelter or windbreak to protect the animals and prevent them from getting chilled. Livestock caloric requirements increase anywhere from 15-30% without windbreaks.<sup>3</sup> When cold temperatures set in and winds become harsh, windbreaks are critical.

## Keep Animals Clean And Well Bedded

Avoid mud at all costs! Mud can have negative impacts on foot and hoof health and can also get caked on the animal's hide, causing them to get chilled. If using a shelter, bed with 25 lb. of straw per 1,000 lb. of bodyweight to keep animals clean, dry and warm. For animals out on pasture, rotate pastures often to minimize the creation of mud in high traffic areas. Bedding can be a valuable tool to increase cattle comfort and performance during extreme weather conditions.

High quality nutrition paired with good management techniques can help your livestock successfully weather the colder months. Call Crystal Creek® today to discuss your winter feeding options.

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Tech, Hall, John, Beef Extension Animal Scientist.

<sup>2</sup> Nebraska Extension, Rasby, Rick, Professor of Animal Science.

<sup>3</sup> University of Idaho Extension, Church, Jim, Extension Educator.