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## **The Highs and Lows**

They say that this temperature thing, will all even out. So when we were having a 60-degree day on Thanksgiving, we should of known we would pay the price!

Severe wind and cold can cause significant problems for livestock and their owners. Evidence of such problems—the blizzard that struck South Dakota on October 4-5 of 2013. The wind, snow, and cold resulted in major cattle loss. The storm caught many by surprise and the loss was estimated to be approximately 5% of the region's cattle herd.

Preparations under way: Having abundant and accessible feed will help animals maintain body temperature and survive cold temperatures. Livestock need extra feed in severe and prolonged cold weather in order to keep up body heat and maintain body condition. A good rule of thumb is to up the amount of feed by 10%.

As wind and the wind chill factor increases, abundant feed alone will not be enough to keep animals warm. Make sure stored winter feed is of good nutrient quality for the type of livestock you are feeding. Make sure you have enough stored winter feed to meet the demands of your livestock for the winter, with plenty to last you in case of prolonged winter storms. If a storm lasts for more than 2 days, emergency feeding methods may be required. Pelleted cake or cake concentrates are examples of emergency feeds.

Be prepared if cold weather or power outages cause mechanized feeders to become inoperable. Regularly check water tanks. Make sure water is clean, free of ice, and in adequate supply. Make sure you have portable watering equipment or a way to maintain water for your livestock in case of extreme cold and ice. If feasible, use heaters in water tanks to provide livestock with adequate water.

Make sure you have tools, rope, blankets, lights, and a portable generator with extension cords and fuel ready to use in case of emergency. Make sure tractors and vehicles are maintained and protected so that they will be ready to use in extreme cold weather and snow/ice. Make sure you have bedding available to be deployed so that you can create a warm and protected place to keep livestock off ice and mud so that they can stay dry.

Care for young animals first, since they are more vulnerable than larger animals. Livestock will often move away from the force of an oncoming storm, unless they are moving toward shelter that is well known to them. Older animals may follow or try to stay near young animals that are being moved or treated, due to herd and/or maternal instinct.

Livestock may avoid traveling directly into the force of an oncoming storm (wind, snow, sleet, etc...). Livestock may resist or be hesitant to leave even limited shelter behind during storm conditions. 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.