

Fenceline
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What can you say about Kansas weather? Could be worse?

As the temperatures plummet and the icy conditions take hold, you can take steps to keep livestock safe and healthy.

Most livestock tolerate cold weather well, However, extreme temperature changes can have a dramatic impact on an animal's health and performance.

Access to fresh water is a must. Stock tanks and ponds should be monitored closely and any ice should be broken if freezing occurs.

Quality hay, feed or forage is critical. Livestock will consume more hay during cold weather as their bodies use the material to create heat during digestion. If you are not already feeding grain, consider adding it as an additional source of nutrition. A parasite control program will also ensure that feed is being digested and used appropriately.

A barn, shed or roofed shelter is ideal during a winter storm, they aren't always necessary. A natural barrier, like a row of trees or a bank, can provide coverage to block the wind and provide some relief from precipitation.

Finally, check your livestock daily, as health problems can worsen more quickly in extreme weather situations. Special attention should be paid to animals that are very young or very old, as they may be less able to tolerate the conditions. Consult your veterinarian with any questions or concerns.

For a 1,200-pound cow with a dry winter coat, the TDN (energy) requirement will increase 1 percent for every degree drop in wind chill below 32 degrees.

If the cow is wet, the increase in energy requirement is 2 percent for every degree below 59 degrees.

In terms of feeding management, this means cows will increase hay intake. So, producers need to make sure they are putting more hay out than usual and refilling feeders more frequently.

Also consider feeding the highest quality hay they have on hand.

Most of our hay in Kansas does not have enough energy to accommodate this increased requirement. So, feeding an additional energy source is recommended.

Additional energy can be supplemented by adding grain and oilseeds (like corn or cottonseed), commodity feeds (like soy hulls or dried distillers grains) or commercially produced feed supplements.

Please be careful not to provide too much of some of these supplements as it could lead digestive issues. Do not provide it "free-choice" but hand feed daily.

Do not feed more than 5 to 6 pounds per head, per day of corn, DDGs or whole cottonseed and gradually increase to the maximum over a few days.