

How to protect livestock in extreme weather

Extreme weather is seldom fun for anyone. Although people often have the means to escape inclement weather, animals are at the mercy of their caregivers.

Protecting animals during extreme weather is not restricted to domesticated pets. Those who have livestock on their properties must recognize that these animals will need various levels of care as well. Animals such as chickens, cattle, goats, and llamas can be adversely affected by extreme weather. Individuals can heed these safety guidelines to avoid subjecting such animals to the stress, discomfort and illness that can result from exposure to extreme weather.

Suitable shelter

One of the best ways to safeguard livestock from extreme weather is to ensure they have a place to escape the elements. Animals can get sunburned and may overheat, so make sure shelters can block the sun's rays on hot days while also allowing for air to circulate through the dwelling.

It's also key that the shelter be capable of accommodating all of the animals at the same time.

Livestock shelters do not have to be complicated. They can be as elaborate as a barn or as simple as carports or tarps and shade cloth.

Fresh water

Access to fresh, clean water is also essential. Dehydration can set in, particularly for animals with thick coats or those that are young or elderly. Animals tend to expend a lot of energy to cool down or stay warm, so they will need an ample supply of water to remain hydrated and healthy.

Standing water can become a breeding ground for parasites and insect larvae. Therefore, change water frequently to make sure it is sanitary. Some farm experts advise aerating troughs to help prevent algae growth or mosquito infestations. A small amount of raw apple cider vinegar may help as well. However, always discuss water sanitation methods with a veterinarian before testing them out on farm animals.

Mold-free feed

Hot, humid temperatures can cause mold to grow on hay and other feed sources. Cows do not like to eat moldy hay and

it can make horses ill. The University of Minnesota Extension says horses are particularly sensitive to dust from mold spores and can get a respiratory disease similar to asthma in humans called recurrent airway obstruction, or RAO, which is often referred to as heaves.

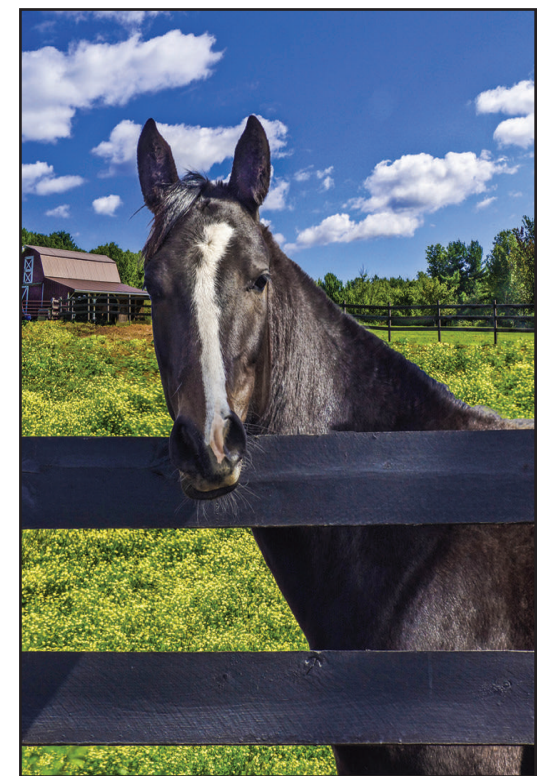
Hay needs to be dried out before it is fed to animals. Any feed should be stored in cool, dry conditions and inspected before being dispersed to livestock.

Hair cut

Woolly animals may benefit from a shear prior to the onset of hot weather, advises the Maryland Small Ruminant group. Do not shear too short. For instance, a one-inch fleece can dissipate heat and help the sheep keep cool.

Rest

Livestock should not be worked and handled during the heat of the day. Their productivity levels may be diminished, and the extra exertion may affect their health. Rest will help them stay happy and healthy until the extreme weather has subsided.



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