

Winter Preparation for Livestock: A Guide for 4-H Kids

By: Kacie Sorensen, Juab County Livestock Coordinator

As winter approaches in Utah, it's crucial for ranchers and 4-H livestock kids to get their cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats ready for the cold. Proper preparation ensures animals stay warm, healthy, and well-fed throughout the harsh months ahead.

Preparing Facilities

Cattle need protection from wind and cold. Ranchers often repair fences, clean barns, and set up windbreaks—barriers that shield cattle from harsh winter winds. Inside barns, bedding like straw provides warmth, and water tanks are equipped with heaters to keep drinking water from freezing.

Pigs are more sensitive to cold than cattle, so their shelters need extra insulation and deep bedding for warmth. Sealing drafts and using heat lamps, especially for young pigs, helps maintain a safe environment. Good ventilation is important to reduce moisture and keep air fresh in pig barns.

Sheep and Goats need access to shelters that block wind and precipitation. While sheep can tolerate the cold due to their wool, goats are more vulnerable and may require blankets in extreme weather. Ranchers ensure bedding stays dry and warm, and barns are checked for drafts to keep animals comfortable.

Winter Nutrition

During winter, livestock expend more energy staying warm, so their diets need to be adjusted accordingly.

Cattle are fed high-quality hay, with additional protein supplements like blocks or tubs to maintain energy. Since winter pasture is less nutritious, ranchers increase hay rations and provide mineral supplements to support cattle health.

Pigs need more calories during winter, so ranchers often add grains to their diet to boost energy levels. Water is monitored closely to prevent freezing, ensuring pigs have access to clean, fresh water at all times.

Sheep are fed hay and supplements, especially for pregnant ewes and growing lambs, who need more protein and nutrients during winter. Salt and mineral blocks help maintain their health, and water sources are kept free from ice.

Goats also require extra hay and grain in winter. They are natural browsers, so ranchers may provide branches or forage to keep their diet varied. Like sheep, goats need mineral supplements and plenty of fresh water.

Final Thoughts

Preparing livestock for winter in Utah involves more than just keeping them warm—proper nutrition and shelter are essential for their well-being. Ranchers and 4-H kids work together to ensure cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats are ready for the cold months by maintaining facilities and adjusting feed. With these efforts, livestock can thrive through the winter, and 4-H kids can gain valuable hands-on experience in caring for their animals.