

Winter Power Failure on the Farm

KEEPING ANIMALS AND EQUIPMENT SAFE

A winter power failure or fuel shortage can cause problems on farms, but being prepared can keep problems to a minimum. Ideally you should have a standby electric generator for emergency power. For ideas on types of generators and their operation, see the fact sheet “Using Standby Electric Generators.” Assuming you have no power, take the following precautions to keep animals and equipment safe.

POULTRY AND LIVESTOCK

To protect poultry and livestock during a power failure:

- ◆ *Ventilate buildings.* Do not close buildings tight to conserve heat, since animals could suffocate from lack of oxygen. Clear ice and snow from all vents because oxygen will eventually be used up in mechanically ventilated production facilities. Then open vents to facilitate natural air flow.
- ◆ *Provide water.* All animals, especially cattle, need plenty of water during cold weather. It may be possible to drive your water pump with a small gasoline engine and a belt. Otherwise, you will need to haul water.

If you have an outside source of water, cattle can be turned out to drink it. Be sure to place sand or other gritty material on icy feedlots to provide good footing. Whatever the source of water, watch that it remains unfrozen so animals can drink it.

- ◆ *Provide heat.* Use camp stoves and heaters as emergency heat sources for brooders. Plan ahead to have this equipment ready when needed.
- ◆ *Provide feed.* Animals need extra energy for body heat during severe or prolonged cold weather, especially if they are outside without shelter. Mechanical feeders will be inoperable during a power failure. Provide for emergency feeding procedures.

EQUIPMENT

Unplug or turn off all electric equipment to prevent damage when power is restored.

If you use portable space heaters for supplemental heat, close off the fuel valve as soon as possible after power is interrupted. (On models not equipped with safety shut-offs, and especially on some models with gravity feed fuel systems, fuel continues to flow even when the burner is inoperative. An explosion or fire could result when power is restored.)

STORING MILK

- ◆ Request that the dairy pick up milk as soon as possible.
- ◆ Consider adding a standby power generator to handle vital electric equipment.

Even if you are short of extra milk storage facilities, do not store milk in stock tanks or other containers. Dairy plants may not accept milk that has been stored in anything other than regular milk storage containers. Check with your local dairy about policy regarding emergency storage of milk.

If you are unable to cool your milk or have it picked up, check your tank for souring each time you add milk to it. This check could mean the difference between losing all or only part of your milk supply.

Additional resources:

Your county agricultural agent