

Winter cattle yard preparations
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This checklist is not comprehensive, but is a place to start for preparing for winter weather in a cattle feedyard.

Facilities

- Check water trough insulation, electrical outlets, heating elements and water flow (including evidence of leaks).
- Ensure there is at least one working hair blow-dryer in each office or cattle shack (to thaw frozen lines).
- Scrape and reshape dirt around water troughs and feedbunk aprons.
- If possible, re-fill low spots in pens with dirt or a combination of dirt and fly ash.
- Set up windbreaks in or around pens.
- Ensure sufficient bedding (from ½ to 1 round bale per head space) is available and stockpiled closest to where it will be used.
- Re-hang sagging gates and repair fences where cattle may escape.
- Patch feed bunks.
- Relocate posts, gates, cattle handling equipment (headgates, calving pens, etc.), and implements (including chains, wood blocks, shovels, etc.) from areas where they may freeze onto the ground preventing easy access later (in the tree grove or stacked against a building where rain and snow will drift or melt and freeze).
- If parking equipment indoors, remind everyone to back in equipment with blades or buckets (tractors, UTV's, skid steers, payloaders) so that they may be ready to plow their way out. This includes mixer feed trucks or tractors.
- Remind everyone of their assignments when an ice or snowstorm hits (how soon to start and where to meet at the yard, and what they are expected to do).
- Service scales and grease cattle chutes, alleyways and tubs.
- Check that outlets and block heaters serving parked equipment are working properly.
- Clean (blow dirt and debris off cabs and beds), grease and inspect all loading, mixing and delivery equipment.
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs in the yard, cattle shacks, shops, or offices.

Animal Health

- Review and update health protocol with veterinarian. Obtain prescriptions for prescribed antibiotics (oral and injectable), dewormers, and supportive therapies.
- Review cattle health protocols with appropriate personnel and post them where everyone can see them. Ensure that everyone knows what situations require veterinary oversight.
- Remind everyone of Beef Quality Assurance practices, including drug withdrawal and euthanasia procedures.
- Purchase and store at least 2/3 of all tags, needles, vaccines, biologics, implants, antibiotics, dewormers, and supportive therapy needed for the winter.
- Clean and lubricate veterinary equipment and ensure that it is in working condition. Calibrate dosing equipment. Replace any equipment that does not perform to standards.
- Check that veterinary refrigerators are cooling product to between 36 and 46 °F and ensure that coolers used chute-side keep product in this temperature range also.

- Remind everyone to rotate stock so product closer to expiration date is used first. Throw away any expired or opened product.

Personal Safety & Preparedness

- Have everyone clean and review their outdoor clothing supplies and make sure there is sufficient hanging space for these in the shop, cattle shack, or office: outer jackets, jumpsuits, coveralls, snow boots, gloves, mittens, hats, scarves, etc.
- Go through first aid kit and remove and replace expired products.
- Post emergency procedures for various situations that may be encountered: loose livestock, injured livestock or workers, extreme weather events, power outages, etc.

Supplies to have on-hand

(in vehicles, cattle or loading chutes, the shop or office)

- deicer salt, sand or traction grit
- heat lamps
- heaters
- flashlights
- fuel cans
- starter fluid
- battery starters and/or chargers
- batteries (all types)
- gate chains
- load chains
- tow straps
- fuel-drawing pumps
- jumper cables
- bolt cutters
- tool sets (wrenches, hammers, mallets, baling wire)