

Around Dakota Ag

Are you ready for winter?

THOUGH it is still fall, get ready for winter soon, urges Tracey Erickson, South Dakota State University Extension dairy field specialist.

“It never fails that in winter Murphy’s Law prevails, and equipment will break down or have problems on one of those

extremely cold days, making repair work miserable,” Erickson says.

At the top of her list, which applies to all types of livestock and crop operations, are these suggestions:

1. Make way for snow removal. Pick up any items from the yard that may become

buried under a snow bank or entangled in the snow blower.

2. Put up a snow fence. Put up an appropriate snow fence or snow break in yards for protection and to minimize drifts in areas where they are not wanted.

3. Fix muddy areas. Consider bringing

in any necessary fill, or mounding areas that become muddy or troublesome spots in the spring.

4. Do barn maintenance now. Take a look at your barn maintenance list: Check curtains on barns to make sure they are operating properly and repair any holes or tears. Check and maintain ventilation fans, including tightening belts and keeping blades and louvers clean. Look upward, inspect and repair building roofs and rafters, making sure to repair loose tin or cracked rafters. Maintain and repair any doors in freestall barns that may not open or close properly. Check and clean barn heaters to make sure they are operating properly. Outside, do preventive trimming of trees around barns, driveways and fences.

5. Test and service your generator(s). Make sure there is adequate fuel on hand to run them.

6. Winterize and service farm equipment such as tractors, semis, skid loaders, pay loaders, feed-mixing wagons, manure pumps, etc. Take time to check antifreeze levels, batteries and fuel filters as these items routinely cause issues in cold weather. Keep extra fuel filters on hand for equipment that uses diesel fuel and may gel up in extreme cold.

7. Examine snow blowers or other snow removal equipment. Make sure equipment is in proper working order.

8. Obtain and store enough fuel (No. 1 diesel or 50:50 blend) to run equipment for an extended period of time. A two-week supply is suggested.

9. Clean and check heating elements in all water drinking fountains.

10. Repair any water fountains or water lines that may be leaking. Ice buildup is a hazard to livestock and humans.

11. Have adequate feed supplies moved in for easy access to the farm. It’s best to have at least a two-week supply of purchased feedstuffs and veterinary supplies.

12. Be ready to use calf coats on newborn dairy calves until they are weaned.

13. Provide adequate bedding for all livestock. Make sure it is deep enough for them to nest in to help maintain body heat.

14. Examine body condition and hair coat of various groups of livestock. Adjust rations appropriately for cold weather.

15. Evaluate shelter for livestock in open lots. Make sure there is adequate wind protection and the ability to get bedding pack built up for them prior to poor weather.

16. Develop a plan with milk haulers and milk buyers for options if milk is unable to be picked up for an extended period of time.

17. Partner with neighbors and develop a plan if it is necessary to do your own snow removal on public access roads.

Source: SDSU Extension

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