

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So as I record this episode, it's currently about 10 degrees Fahrenheit outside. We had a snow storm over the weekend. They're calling for another storm today. We're going to have crazy high winds on Thursday, so it's going to be pretty exciting here over the next few days. I kind of feel like living in Wyoming has given me a pH D in homesteading, in freezing temperatures and in today's episode I thought it would be fun and maybe a little bit educational for some of you who live in warmer climates. For me to dive into some of our strategies and routines for keeping our animals warm and safe throughout the winter months.
- Speaker 1: [00:52](#) I'm your host Jill winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills.
- Speaker 1: [01:10](#) So I actually really enjoy chores in the winter time, which sounds funny. I mean, I don't enjoy the cold fingers or the shivering on occasion, but there's something really special to me about going out on this still snowy morning or in the evening before it gets dark and making sure all the animals are tucked into the coop or into the corrals and they have the food and the water. It just feels like a little bit more of an adventure. So some of you who live in super warm climates might think that sounds absolutely crazy. But I kind of enjoy it in a weird way, although come about April, I'm kind of over it and ready for some warmer temperatures, but I thought it would be fun if I dove into the specifics of how we take care of our chickens and our horses and our goats and our cattle during the winter time. Because we've kind of gotten into a routine over the years because let's face it, winter lasts about eight months here. So we kind of have to learn how to roll with it.
- Speaker 1: [02:18](#) So let's start with feed. Whether that's hay or chicken feed or whatever. Let's talk about how we roll with feed during the winter time. So we actually don't do a lot of extra fancy feed. Some people do that kind of depends on your animal, and their needs. If you have a lactating animal, you may need to boost their intake with some grain or some extra calories during the colder winter months. If you have an older animal, sometimes they need a little extra boost, but we usually have found we don't need to add extra grain into the diet. For the most part, what we do do is make sure our animals have plenty of hay available at all times. Now the reason behind this is because the process of digesting roughage, which is hay, right? It helps keep horses and cattle and goats warm. So that internal digestion

actually plays a really big role in keeping those animals comfortable.

Speaker 1: [03:25](#) So the number one thing we do is make sure that when it gets super duper cold that every everybody out in the barn has enough hay to munch on throughout the day. They're just going to burn a lot more calories as well. Trying to keep warm. Sometimes we have our animals out on pasture when it's snowing, but honestly they don't get a lot of nutrition out there at that point. Usually the grass is pretty Brown and dry and if it's snow covered they might be able to pick through the snow and get a little bit of grazing in, but it's not going to be enough for the most part to keep them where they need to be nutrient wise. So we do feed large round bales of grass hay during the winter and we usually do that free choice. You may have seen pictures of us putting these giant bales into the feeder with our tractor or skid loader.

Speaker 1: [04:20](#) Maybe we've done pictures and videos of that on social media and YouTube, but we basically allow the cattle at least to be free choice on those bales during the winter months. The horses technically could be free choice, but our horses tend to get really fat really easily. So I try to lock them off the bale usually for about 12 hours on 12 hours off just to try to manage their weight a little bit. But if your animals need it, they can stay on a bale, throughout the day often or rather, maybe not often, but sometimes we use a grass alfalfa mix for that bale, especially for our cattle that have calves on them or cows that are lactating just to have a little extra protein without alfalfa. But for everything else, usually grass is sufficient. Now back in the day before we got fancy with our tractors and equipment, we did just feed small square bales.

Speaker 1: [05:30](#) And I'm guessing that if you're just starting out in homesteading, this is probably what you're using. So if you're feeding small squares, you're just going to divide out the portions and then usually, you know, back then we would feed some in the morning, some in the evening. They're not necessarily going to be able to eat on that all day long because you're probably not going to be able to be out there feeding all day long. But it still, as long as you're feeding them a nice portion in the morning and a nice portion in the evening, you should be fine. I will say though that getting a tractor has saved us a ton of work and just being able to use those large round bales, they're easier to stack, not as much man hours required handling them. So that's been really nice, but it's not a necessity. Okay. So for feed we get plenty of hay, not necessarily grain unless an animal really needs it.

Speaker 1: [06:29](#) Let's talk. Water. Water is a really big deal. Even in the winter time. I know, we think that, you know, the hot summer months are where we really need to be focused on water. It is just as important during the winter. Now the problem is that watering in the winter when it's consistently below zero is not exactly my idea of a good time. I'm guessing it's probably not yours either. But it's something you really need to have a plan for, especially if you have dairy animals because lactating animals need lots of water even when it's cold. My biggest bit of advice I think around watering would be for you to invest in the tools you need or the plumbing you need to prevent yourself from having to haul water from the house. Because let's face it, like nobody has time to be hauling water from the house when it's cold multiple times a day, especially if you have larger animals like horses or cattle, that is kind of the prescription for a nightmare.

Speaker 1: [07:42](#) And the other reason behind that is if you're just hauling buckets, you know, warm buckets of water from the house, it's really easy to accidentally skimp on the water you're providing. So the animals might not be getting as much as they need. So I know that, you know, if you're just getting your homestead infrastructure set up, this might be your only option. So do what you got to do. But I would say if you're creating that homestead project list, I would put water out to the barn or you know, barn water or barn hydrants or barn water heaters way up there as a top priority because this is a huge time suck if you're trying to get, you know, buckets into the bathtub and use a sled to get them down to the barn, just not a good time. So for our watering setup, we have a big old stock tank that our horses and cattle share and we use a tank heater.

Speaker 1: [08:43](#) You can get them at any feed store. They're pretty inexpensive. You just do have to have electricity for them and we leave that plugged in when it's super cold. When it's way below zero, we sometimes have to use an ax to chop the ice out, but it's not as thick when that tank heater is in the water. If you are trying to chop completely unheated water, like it can get many, many inches thick and you need to have some muscle behind that ax because it can be quite the workout chopping the chunks of ice out.

Speaker 1: [09:21](#) For our chickens it's really important that they have access to good water in the winter as well. We will use a heated dog bowl. Again, these are available at usual, you know, your regular feed stores or your big box stores. You plug them in to the outlet and it keeps the water from freezing. It's pretty handy. The only thing I don't like about it is that it's not a huge capacity, so you have to fill it up at least twice a day to make

sure they have enough. But it's a good option and you're not having to break buckets all the time.

Speaker 1: [10:02](#)

For our smaller animals, like the goats who are usually in a pen inside the barn during the winter, I like to use a five gallon or rather, actually it's probably not a five gallon, it's like a, a three gallon bucket that they sell at the feed store. It's an animal bucket, but I like the rubber ones because what you can do is if they're frozen or they have a couple inches of ice on the top, you can take the bucket and kind of bash it against the ground or throw it against the ground and the rubber tends to help the ice break up more easily. If you try that with a typical plastic bucket, you're probably going to break it, which I've done that more than once. So we like the rubber. If we have to use a bucket, we find that's a little bit easier. The same goes for a rubber feed pan. They're more flexible and it's easier to smash the ice out of them. Yeah, I'm just looking at my notes here. So all in all, you don't have to have electricity necessarily, right? There's ways to work around frozen water and if worst comes to worst, just use an ax, right? There's plenty of times we have just depended on the good old ax to keep things rolling and that's fine. But electricity does make winter barn tours a little bit more enjoyable.

Speaker 1: [11:24](#)

Okay. Moving on to shelter. This is one, that I find I often get yelled at about online. So whenever I post pictures of our cows out in the snow or our horses standing in the pasture, inevitably someone will leave a comment and chastise me for being so cruel in leaving our animals outside. Or they'll say, bring it in and bring the cow in and bring the horse in. So here's the thing with shelter, large animals and livestock, as long as they have proper hair, don't necessarily need to be in a heated building, right? They are designed to be out in the elements and their hair coat is pretty amazing at insulating that animal. And horses, cattle, goats, sheep don't have to have a barn to survive a winter, even a Wyoming winter, they can be absolutely fine out in the pasture. The one thing they need, at least in our area is a wind break.

Speaker 1: [12:34](#)

So it's not even something with a roof or a covering. The animal just needs a way to get out of the wind because when an animal gets wet and then the wind blows, that's when, things can get a little bit iffy. So what we do is we have windbreaks available to all of our critters, at all times actually. Cause the wind blows year-round here, although it blows definitely way worse in the winter. But anyway, our wind breaks are a variety of things. Sometimes they're a building, sometimes there are wood fences that we've built with very tall vertical wood slats, and that acts

as a windbreak. And for out in our one pasture, which is a little bit more exposed, we actually have these huge steel panels. Our neighbor welds them specifically for use as windbreaks for cattle and we have those situated so they block the wind from the North and the West because that's where our most powerful gusts come from a year round.

New Speaker:

[13:42](#)

So we have windbreaks, but we don't necessarily have shelter. And I have to giggle a little bit when I get these comments because when you think of the hundreds of thousands of cattle that call, you know, the West home or call Wyoming home, trying to build barns for all of those would be impossible. So trust me, as long as your animal has good hair, which they will develop on their own, when the seasons change, they'll be fine. Now we do have a barn and sometimes during our very worst blizzards, I will open up the barn for the horses because the horses are my babies and I spoil them. However, they are fine outside 99.9% of the time. Now with chickens or poultry, it's a little bit different. They do need more of a shelter and they will need a place to roost.

Speaker 1:

[14:41](#)

So your chickens will need more than just a wind break. But they're pretty good at finding that. So we have a chicken coop. Of course, I don't always heat it. In fact, there are most of the winter months, I don't put the heat lamp on. I only turn it on if it's very, very frigid outside. We have a handful of rogue chickens who have decided they hate me and want nothing to do with me and will not stay in the chicken enclosure no matter what. And I've been amazed, you know, I've tried to catch them. I put them in, I try to feed them. They just were like, get away from me. We don't like you. They're Icelandic, which is this heritage breed that's a little bit off Standard to say the least. Anyway, these Icelandic chickens will roost up in the rafters of an open shed that we have.

Speaker 1:

[15:30](#)

It's a three sided shed, so it's not exactly insulated. Doesn't have a heat lamp and as long as they can get up into the rafters, these stinkin chickens have survived crazy cold temperatures, like ridiculously cold temperatures. They just got up and above. So it's not my preference for them to be up there, but it's been reassuring to know that they can survive if they're being jerks because they won't cooperate with my plan of keeping them in the chicken coop. So anyway, chickens do need some sort of shelter and roosting, preferably something that's away from drafts. Or if you have a lot of humidity in the winter, it's ideal that they have, um, a non humid area cause that can really contribute to frostbite. But chickens are a lot tougher than we give them credit for as well. Okay. So just a few other little tips

for you as we wrap up our conversation on winter livestock care. Don't forget to keep your salt and mineral feeders full during the winter. For some reason. It's really easy for me to forget to check those when the snow comes. So just give those a glance. The animals still need the salt and the nutrients even during the winter months.

Speaker 1: [16:57](#) This kind of goes without saying, but if you're brand new to cold weather homesteading, drain your hoses every single time you use them otherwise. Right? We know what happens. You'll end up with a bunch of frozen hoses either in your bathtub or your mud room and they drip and they make a huge mess. So avoid that and just drain the hose outside as a part of your routine. It will save you a lot of headache. Ask me how I know. Okay. This is one that I've learned the hard way over the years. During the winter, if you live in a climate like we do when the temperatures rise above freezing, get out there and clean the barn as fast as you can because when the temperatures drop again, the poop freezes to the ground.

Speaker 2: [17:50](#) And honestly it makes me very aggravated when I go out there and the barn is disaster and I can't do anything about it cause it's all frozen solid. So when the temperatures rise, get out there, clean it and you're going to be really glad you did.

Speaker 1: [18:07](#) Alrighty my friends, those are my best tips for homesteading with livestock in the winter. It's definitely an adventure and it's definitely more work than the breezy, easy summer months. But honestly, I'm kind of thankful for the days when I'm forced to get out there in the cold and be a little uncomfortable because I think I appreciate coming into a warm cozy house with the pot of soup on the stove and the roaring fire that much more. And I think if we're comfortable all the time in our surroundings, right? If we work so hard as humans sometimes to make sure we never are uncomfortable or we never experienced discomfort, well it's really easy to take a lot of things for granted and I think that applies to a whole lot of aspects of life, not just homesteading. So roll with the punches in the winter. Enjoy the chores, right? You're, you are partaking in traditions of barn chores and milking in the cold and dealing with animals in the snow that our home setting ancestors were very familiar with. And then we'll all celebrate together when spring rolls around.

Speaker 1: [19:23](#) So if you are ready to do this homesteading thing, make it happen. Put your feeling a little bit unsure of how or where to start. Well that is my specialty. I happen to have an entire library of resources I put together for homesteaders just like

you, and you can get complimentary access to this library over at www.theprairiehomestead.com/grow and I'll leave that link in the show notes, but one more time. It's the Prairie homestead.com forward slash grow G, R O, w and that's it for this episode. If you enjoyed it, I would love it if you would take a minute to pop over to your favorite podcast player and leave a quick review so more homesteaders can find this podcast and I appreciate you taking the time to listen. We'll chat more on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.