



# Animals affected by a snowstorm

## Advice for livestock, lifestyle block, horse and pet owners

Your animals are your responsibility. You need to include them in your planning in the event of an emergency. The following information will help you prepare to ensure the welfare of your animals in a snowstorm.

### Advance planning

Make sure your family, any workers, and your neighbours are safe. Have a plan – it should include animals, whether they are pets or livestock.

If you have to evacuate, take your pets with you – if you can do so safely.

You should move livestock if snow is forecast - watch the weather forecasts.

They will need food and water as soon as possible. Move them to accessible areas in case supplementary feed is required.

In particular, high-value stock or vulnerable stock (e.g. stock close to giving birth, new-borns, and young stock) should be moved to areas which will be easily accessible in case they need assistance, supplementary feed or veterinary treatment.

Always prepare for a potential lack of transport and power outages. Farmers should have their own or have access to a backup generator.

### Containment - Livestock

Check that all stock are contained.

Move stock away from high risk areas such as: paddocks near cliffs, potential flooding zones, and steep banks or deep gullies where large amounts of snow may accumulate.

Note that snow melt may cause flooding.

Check fences and gates for damage and if they are still functional. Check that electric fences are still working.

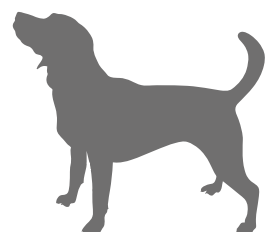
Where electric fences are being used to break feed winter feed crops, remove stock if the electric fences are not functional, to prevent engorgement and metabolic problems, and also trampling of the crop.

If your stock have been loose, or other stock have wandered onto your property, keep them separately contained, for biosecurity reasons, until you can ascertain their health status.

Large scale evacuations may be coordinated by organisations such as Federated Farmers and dairy companies (for dairy animals). Your local Civil Defence/Emergency Management office may have plans for livestock evacuations.



See full First Aid Kit  
checklist [here](#).



### Shelter - Livestock

If possible move stock to sheltered paddocks, plantations, or bushy areas. Be careful if putting stock into gullies.

Prioritize giving shelter to stock that are young, close to giving birth, or have recently been clipped or shorn (in the case of sheep, goats or alpacas). New-born lambs that are left sitting or lying in snow are more likely to die.

Provide covers for young stock if possible. Make use of buildings such as shearing sheds, hay sheds or implement sheds, especially for young stock if available.

Avoid mixing stock that are not usually in contact. Keep sick stock contained away from all other stock.

Where animals are housed e.g. pigs, poultry, deer, check building roofs, as excess weight from snow may cause collapse.

### Shelter – Pets

If possible bring pets indoors or into shelter.

Make sure your animal can freely move away from any external heat sources and there is good ventilation. Keep animals away from coming in contact with heat sources such as fires to reduce the risk of burns. Gas heaters should be flued.

Do not keep your animal in a garage or room with vehicles or gas heaters, as even small amounts of carbon monoxide will kill them.

Keep animals away from antifreeze (ethylene glycol) solutions. If spillage occurs when filling up machinery, clean it up straight away. Ethylene glycol toxicity can be fatal. It requires immediate treatment from a veterinarian. If you suspect your animal has ingested or walked through ethylene glycol contact your veterinarian immediately.

### Hypothermia

If exposed to the cold, animals may suffer from hypothermia (loss of body temperature) or frostbite. The coat on your animal may make it harder to detect frostbite or cold stress. Signs may include shivering, feeling cold to touch, drowsiness, reduced movement, and collapse.

Treatment of hypothermia is to raise the body temperature slowly, otherwise the animal can die if it is raised too quickly.

Suggested treatment:

- Insulation e.g. covers, rugs, blankets, woolsacks, hay, straw
- Warm water – very small amounts only for drinking
- Warm ambient temperature if in a contained building.

Heat pads or wheat packs may be useful to help keep your animal warm. However be mindful your animal doesn't puncture or chew pads/packs, for this reason gel packs are not recommended. Ensure animals have the ability to move away from it to avoid overheating and contact burns. Test the temperature of a heat pack on the back of your bare hand. If it is too hot for you it is too hot for animals.

If you think your animal is not responding contact a veterinarian as soon as possible.

### Feed and water – Livestock

A feeding plan is a useful way to make sure you have enough feed on hand.

Ensure you have sufficient supplementary feed on hand such as hay, silage, pellets etc. Your animal will lose condition quickly in the cold and it is important they have a nutrient-rich source of feed.

Animals exposed to the cold will have a significant increase to their feed needs. Allow enough food and water for at least five days. Most animals need 60ml water/kg/24 hours each to sustain hydration levels.

Prioritize feeding to high priority animals – high value stock or vulnerable stock (e.g. stock close to giving birth, young stock).

Get water and feed to your animals as soon as possible.

Check that snow or ice has not blocked or damaged troughs, or water supplies.



Even covered water supplies may freeze over.

Breaking surface ice may provide access to water, however check that the water doesn't freeze over again.

Check machinery such as water pumps as they may be impaired by snow or ice.

Check trough buoyancy regulators are still functional.

Once snow has melted, examine pastures and crops, to ensure they have not rotted and are safe for consumption.

## Support and assistance

Federated Farmers – **0800 327 646 (0800 FARMING)**

National Emergency Management Agency – **[www.civildefence.govt.nz](http://www.civildefence.govt.nz)**

Local CDEM – **<http://www.civildefence.govt.nz/find-your-civil-defence-group>**

Rural Support Trust – **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)**

For animal welfare advice or assistance contact Ministry for Primary Industries (Animal Welfare) on phone **0800 00 83 33**

Beef+Lamb New Zealand – **<https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/snow-guidelines>**

DairyNZ – **<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/business/adverse-events/heavy-snow>**

Fire and Emergency Service – Dial **111**

Police – Dial **111**

Local Animal Control – contact your local Council.

