

Winter Preparedness For Sheep



Fleece provides natural insulation to extreme weather, but during periods of prolonged weather stress, their capacity to maintain a stable body temperature decreases and can result in hypothermia ("temperature below normal").

Sheep are hardy animals that do not require as much shelter as people may believe.



Acclimitization takes approximately 2 weeks and lasts for 2 months.

Sheep shorn in late winter/early spring are more acclimatized to cold weather due to exposure prior to shearing. Once sheep are acclimatized they are less likely to die from hypothermia.



Impact of cold weather depends on duration, precipitation, wind speed, and temperature.

**General rule:
add 1/4 lb of total digestible
nutrients (TDN) for every 10
degrees below the lower
critical temperature (LCT).**

Healthy ewes need to eat 1.5 to 2 lbs of forage a day.

Example) a 70kg ewe would required
0.66 (66%) TDN

$1/4 \text{ lb (0.25)} \times 0.66 \text{ TDN} = 0.165 \text{ lbs of}$
forage added for every 10 degrees
below LCT



**Build shelters on
slightly elevated ground
that has good drainage.**

**Sheep can graze
through 12 inches of
snow.**

Ensure shelters are ventilated to prevent build up of moisture and ammonia. One wall should be facing the direction of the wind. Always house sheep that have been sheared or given birth in the last 10 days in shelters.

If snow is not hard or crusted, sheep can eat enough to meet their water requirements. However, producers are encouraged to provide water access at all times via bowls or troughs as a primary water source.



References

- 1) <https://www.uaex.edu/media-resources/news/september2014/09-26-2014-UAPB-Winter-Shelters.aspx>
- 2) <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animal-welfare/hypothermia-sheep>
- 3) http://www.farmandranchguide.com/news/livestock/provide-sheep-with-adequate-care-in-winter/article_4b3d00d8-87c2-11e4-98d8-5fef64eebc9a.html
- 4) <http://www.ozarksfn.com/mo-articles-aamp-stories-editorial-159/90-farm-help-missouri/2512-preparing-sheep-for-winter.pdf>
- 5) <http://www.sheep101.info/201/housing.html>
- 6) <http://www.tannertrading.co.uk/blog/advice/winter-preparation-sheep-care/>