



**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online <https://ksre-learn.com/cattle-chat-preparing-for-winter>

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Cattle Chat: Preparing for winter

K-State beef cattle experts say monitoring body condition, preparing for calving and updating records are important this time of year

By [Lisa Moser](#), K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — As people anticipate cold temperatures, many choose to winterize their homes as a way of optimizing the environment and minimizing the added expense of heating.

Just as people prepare for the winter months, the experts at the Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute say there are things that ranchers can do to help the cattle get through the winter months.

Speaking on a recent [Cattle Chat](#) podcast, K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster stressed the importance of having spring-calving cows in good body condition heading into winter.

“In really cold weather, the cow’s energy maintenance requirement can increase from 20-40%, so it is important to increase the caloric intake of cows that are too thin,” Lancaster said. He said it is also important that cattle have access to water.

“Make sure you routinely check the (farm’s) water sources to make sure they aren’t frozen over so that cattle can drink the water,” Lancaster said.

For ranchers who calve in the winter months, it is important to monitor the weather and be able to get the newborns to a warm and dry place when the temperature drops and moisture sets in, K-State veterinarian Todd Gunderson said.

“Once the temperatures get into the teens, producers need to worry about the newborn calves experiencing frostbite, especially on their ears and tails,” he said.

K-State veterinarian Brad White agreed and added, “Cold and wet conditions can lead to negative health outcomes as opposed to those that are born in a cold, but dry environment.”

To keep the calves dry, some producers will move the cows to a calving barn, according to Gunderson, who stressed the importance of sanitation and fresh bedding to reduce the spread of disease.

“It is important to keep calves that are in the first 24 to 48 hours of their life in a warm and dry environment and then move them out of the barn to reduce the risk for contamination and disease transmission,” he said.

The K-State experts also recommend that producers update their ranch’s year-end records.

“When it is too cold to be outside, that is a great time to get the records updated on the computer and do some review of how the herd performed in the last year,” K-State agricultural economist Dustin Pendell said. “You can look at the data and think about what you did well and areas to improve upon in the year ahead.”

To hear the full discussion, listen to [Cattle Chat](#) on your preferred streaming platform.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

Beef Cattle Institute Cattle Chat podcast, <https://ksre-learn.com/cattle-chat-winter-preparation>

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