

# The Basics: Winterizing Your Coop

Lauren Langley, Livestock Extension Agent

Source: Brigid McCrea, Poultry Specialist, Delaware State University

Winter is here! How is your coop handling the weather? Here are a few helpful tips for winterizing your coop:

## Water

Water intake will decrease 3.5 times in the winter (40°F) in comparison to a summer day (90°F). Frozen water is not easily broken by chickens, so you need to check water several times daily if temperatures remain below freezing. Looking for an easy fix? Try hanging a brooder lamp above the water (make sure it is secured) or use a heater for the base of your waterer. Also, make sure to insulate pipes and hoses that may be exposed to freezing temperatures.

## Feed

As water intake decreases with cold weather, feed intake increases by 1.5 times. Make sure feeders are full so birds are able to consume enough energy. You can provide extra energy with supplemental scratch grains each evening.

## Insulation

Make sure your coop is insulated. Research has shown that a comfortable range in temperatures for chickens is 55-75°F. Insulating your coop can save money in electricity and contribute to egg production and weight gains.

## Heat & Thermometer

Use your brooder lamps to provide supplementary heat in the house during the winter. They are safe to use if properly hung from the rafters or from a hook in the coop. Rodents can quickly chew through string, so it is recommended that wire or chain be used for hanging lamps to lower the risk of a fire from lamps that fall to the house floor. It is recommended to place 2 min/max thermometers in the coop so that you will know how cold (or hot) it was during the night (one at bird level and one at perch height).

## Bedding

It is only going to benefit your flock to add more bedding. Extra bedding will create an extra layer of insulation to the floor of the coop.

This does not mean that regular cleaning should be delayed. High ammonia levels can be the result of not regularly cleaning out the coop which can lead to blindness.

## Eliminate Drafts

Any hole or crack large enough to let light in is certainly letting out heat. The simplest method is to cover the crack or wall with thick plastic. Keep in mind, ventilation is still important for bird health even in the winter time, so do not seal up the coop too tight!

## Frostbite

Check your birds daily for frostbite, which is more common in birds that have large combs and wattles. You will see black spots on the comb or wattles that indicate frostbite. Additionally, you may see yellowish blisters on affected areas.



Black patches on comb and wattles indicate frostbite.

*For the full article:* <http://www.desu.edu/sites/default/files/winterfactsheet.pdf>