

PLANNING AHEAD FOR ANIMAL CARE CAN LET YOU HAVE TIME AWAY

You have moved to the country and have animals, which means - NO MORE VACATIONS!

Right?

No. The health and welfare of your animals should always be on your mind. Animal care does require a change in recreational habits but not the end of vacations. A well thought-out plan and schedule will ensure the safety and proper welfare for your livestock while away.

Livestock and other animals require some basic requirements.

Suitable water, sufficient feed, appropriate shelter, and intermittent supervision are all needed for ensuring animal health. These requirements can be arranged prior to leaving off-site.

Options are available for securing care for animals:

- Visit with friends or neighbors about covering while you are gone. Reciprocating the favor is greatly appreciated.

- Hiring someone trustworthy to conduct daily checks on your animals.
- A number of trusty 4-H and FFA youths are always looking for part-time work.

Help your caretakers:

- Set up times to check-in with them.
- Ensure they have your cell phone number and contact information for someone local and a veterinarian who knows your animals.
- Write a clear plan and instructions for feeding and any healthcare.
- Walk your caretaker through the daily routine before you leave to let them gain familiarity with your animals and property.
- Try to schedule times to be away during seasons or time periods that are the easiest to care for livestock. For example, livestock allowed to graze in pasture some of the day helps shrink workloads.

ENSURING WATER, NUTRITIONAL NEEDS MET

Reliable and clean water available is essential. Per animal, per day requirements are: horses 8-20 gallons; cattle 10-12 gallons;



sheep and goats 1-3 gallons; swine 3-7 gallons; and alpacas 2-5 gallons.

The daily intake of water required per animal can double if animals are lactating or gestating, if temperatures are high, or they are very active. Water tanks and sources should not be contaminated with unwanted materials, chemicals, or filled with algae.

Animals need proper nutrition that includes the recommended amount of dry matter intake for each livestock species. Dry matter intake is determined by the amount of forage specific livestock species need each day for proper health based on an animal's weight. This value is reported as a percent of the body weight for daily forage intake.

Suggested dry matter intake requirements for common livestock is 2.0-2.5 percent for horses; 2-3.5 percent for beef cattle; 1-4 percent for sheep and goats; 2-7 percent for swine; and 2-3 percent for alpacas.

Feed rations vary with animal age, activity, lactation, and gestation. Forage should be clean and readily available for caretakers to access.

Animals need access to a safe shelter to minimize the risk of injury. Before going on vacation, slowly walk through facilities and repair or remove any element that may injure an animal. Make sure gates are functioning and fences are suitable and intact.

Last but not least, set up a schedule and develop an animal welfare plan with caretakers for the duration away on vacation.

HAVE PLAN TO CHECK PROPERTY

Caretakers can also keep an eye on facilities.

Some common issues include livestock getting out, moving to unwanted areas to consume stored forage, predation issues, trespass problems, or livestock injury. A good guideline is to have the caretaker check your property at least once every 72 hours. This is a reasonable schedule even if the property has established automatic watering and bulk feeding. Secure the

premises and if needed inform others of your plans.

A remote camera might be considered to allow a spot check of animals from time to time.

Don't forget that a thoughtful thank you and appreciation to caretakers or neighbors helps grow trust.

For more information, contact your local UW Extension office (www.uwyo.edu/uwe/county) or the author.

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