

November 8, 2017

**By: Spencer Perkins
County Extension Agent**

WINTERIZING YOUR HOME AND RANCH:

With the first frost of the year coming a little early this year I thought winterizing your home and Farm would be a timely topic. When going into the winter we must prepare our home, ranch, and equipment to save us both time and money.

First and foremost, we must wrap all outside pipes and faucets that are left exposed. There is nothing more frustrating than fixing a broken pipe in freezing cold weather. Home improvement stores will have what you need to wrap all exposed pipes.

We also need to think about our vehicles. Make sure that you check that anti-freeze levels in all vehicles including farm trucks, tractors, rtv's, and RV's. This is also a good time to do any yearly maintenance to our farm equipment that typically only gets used through the summer months.

Let's not forget our pets either. Make sure that you have adequate shelter and warm bedding for all our outside pets. During extremely cold periods you might want to put a heat lamp out for your pets. When using a heat lamp take extreme caution not to catch anything on fire. Use heat bulbs instead of a standard light bulb.

Where outside potted plants are concerned either put them in a greenhouse or bring them inside this time of year. They still need sunlight so to arrange them by the windows if possible. When possible take them outside during pretty weather.

Lastly, check your chimney and wood stoves to make sure that the flutes are not clogged or stopped up. Birds love to nest in them if possible. With that being said make sure that you have plenty of dry wood stacked up, it is awful hard to start a fire with wet wood.

FISH FACTS:

As winter seems to be quickly approaching, pond owners seem to quit thinking about fishing and feeding their catfish. While it's true that catfish don't eat much feed in the winter, pond owners that care greatly for their fish and pond management should not totally stop feeding. The lack of feeding during the winter months can even harm the fish's growth for next year. Fingerling sized catfish are particularly susceptible to nutritional deficiencies caused by poor winter nutrition, including emaciation and increased susceptibility of disease and parasite problems.

Food size catfish can lose up to 10 percent of their pre-winter body weight without a winter feeding program. Pond owners should continue to feed a floating ration containing at least twenty-eight percent crude protein during the winter months. Sinking rations are hard to use and should be avoided because of the difficulty of determining how much is consumed by the fish and not left on the bottom to waste.

Landowners can feed up to 1 percent of the total fish weight present on warm afternoons. Catfish will respond best on days when the water temperatures are 54 degrees Fahrenheit or above at the time of feeding. One rule of thumb used is, once the fish come to the top and begin feeding to feed them for approximately ten minutes. If fish do not surface

to feed discontinue feeding until water temperatures increase. We all know in our climate that could change several times throughout the winter. It is key not to overfeed as it can lead to water quality problems next spring.

Although as you can see from above, the weather conditions will dictate the actual frequency of feeding, every other day feeding has shown as much as eighteen percent weight gain through winter feeding programs. The adoption on a winter feeding program is not for every. However, if you want to intensively manage your ponds for catfish you should consider winter feeding to increase fish performance during the next years' growing season.

IMPORTANT DATES:

December 15th - Trinity Valley Ag Chemical Seminar - Mabank Fire Station,
111 E. Mason, Mabank - 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - \$25.00/Person -
6 C. E. U.'s