



### **Winter tips to keep your chickens cosy**

Chickens that are healthy and have good feather coverage are able to cope with most cold weather conditions as feathers provide excellent insulation.

If your chickens have a blueish or very cold comb, they will need extra protection. If you are concerned about your chickens, you can cover the coop overnight with an old carpet, blankets, bubble wrap or flattened cardboard to give extra insulation. Deep (10cm+) dry bedding of chopped straw or wood shavings on the floor will also help keep birds warm.

If you have a few birds in a large coop/stable or converted shed, put a cardboard box on its side, half-filled with chopped straw/wood shavings in a corner within the coop/stable to help conserve body heat. Check after dark that they are all sleeping together in the box.

Smearing combs with Vaseline will help prevent large, floppy combs getting frostbite.

Access to fresh water is vital. Bring drinkers in at night and refill in the morning with warm water, which hens enjoy, topping up with more warm water during the day.

Give them a warm meal using Smallholder Range crumble or pellets mixed with hot water. Just feed enough to ensure it all gets eaten within 30 minutes and repeat the process as necessary.

Give your hens extra corn in the afternoon as this will heat them up internally as they digest it overnight.

Ensure the hens have shelter in their outside run, they dislike the wind chill and driving rain as much as we do. Erecting wooden boards/plastic sheets/tarpaulin/straw bales against the windward side of their run will help, as will providing some cover above to keep them dry.

If the weather conditions are extreme and you have an outbuilding with an electricity supply, heat lamps or oil filled radiators can be used to provide extra warmth, but only do this for feather bare birds and do not make the environment 'warm', just lessen the chill.

Cold weather and snow means other animals are hungry too; make sure food is stored safely away from rats and mice, especially at night, and regularly check fences and coop security; hungry foxes are more daring and determined in winter.