

It's Cold Outside...

During the late fall and winter season the weather can vary greatly here in the Northwest from rainy and temperate, to crystal clear with bone chilling temperatures to snowy and everything in between.

We are often asked what challenges these varying weather conditions pose for us as we continue to care, rehabilitate and re-home animals. First we must say that each group of animals or an individual animal may respond differently based upon their prior life experiences. With that said, hopefully the following pictures and descriptions will give you some insight into varying conditions and the needs of the animals at the sanctuary.

In the wet and damp season when there is constant rain/drizzle and temperatures in the low forties most of the animals do well on their own. They go in and out of their shelters during the day (where there are heat sources, plenty of food/water and dry bedding) and graze or scratch for food outdoors. During the night time they are "put to bed" within their shelters. Our biggest challenge in this type of weather is to keep the areas as dry as possible using lots of moisture absorbing mulch, pine shavings, gravel and/or mats.



As seen here our animal shed bases are constructed of gravel with wooden/matted floors on top. A layer of fresh bedding (grass/straw or pine shavings) is additionally laid down and switched out a couple of times a week to keep the bedding material dry. During the wet temperate season the only significant change in our care is watching to make sure the animals are warm enough and dry (especially the hooves of the mammals living here). There is additional shelter, food and water in every area including trees and feeding stations which we keep replenished throughout the day!

During the clear bone chilling weather we face several unique challenges. Despite various heating systems we still have duck wading ponds, water troughs and various water sources freeze solid during the cold snaps. This winter we had the temperature dip to around 10 degrees Fahrenheit on several nights. Given those conditions we have to get up early and break the ice up, remove it from the containers and refresh it for each animal group.



When temperatures drop this low at night we seldom get up to a temperature that will melt the ice during the day. As a result we have to break up the ice, remove it from each drinking station and waiting pond several times during the day to make sure every animal has sufficient fresh drinkable water etc.

As you can imagine handling metal drinking containers, opening metal gates and working with the field faucets during this type of bitter cold puts a drain on everyone involved in the process. But it is very rewarding at the same time.

It should be noted that all of the animals seem to enjoy this weather to some degree as the sun is shining brightly and there is an invigorating sense that comes along with the bitter cold. They all mosey out of their shelters and enjoy their respective areas during the day. As soon as the sun sets, we don't have any problems getting them back into the warmer sheds though! ☺

When snow hits it is a different story. Dependent upon how cold it is, we may have to break the ice off the pond water and watering troughs but normally that is not as big a task as when it is bone chilling cold and clear. When it snows the residents vary greatly in their reaction to the snow however.

The chickens and goats will venture out for a very short period of time to examine the white surroundings but will quickly head back into their heated sheds/coops where they will spend most of the day eating, drinking and sleeping. With that as a reality we do have a little more clean-up of bodily excrement inside the living areas but that is actually much easier than trying to pick it up in the snow.



The ducks are a totally different story. Our American based ducks (an Indian Runner, a Cayuga and a Welsh Harrier love the snow and frolic in it all day long. They can't wait to get out into their swimming ponds, or play in the snow. Our Muscovy ducks, which are originally from South America, basically dislike the snow. They are reluctant at best to come down the ramp into the white stuff. Once their feet make contact with the snow they quickly retreat back up into their heated shed where they spend most of the day.



Throughout all types of weather we love working with the various animals here at Joplin's Sanctuary. No matter how harsh the weather gets we know that each and every animal is living in an environment which is much better than where they were rescued from.

If you would like to help the sanctuary in its on-going efforts to help stop animal neglect, abuse and abandonment please feel free to make a donation to support our efforts. We at the sanctuary want to wish you and yours a joyous holiday season and a prosperous and healthy new year.