



# NEWS LINE

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## Adequate livestock water supply and safety of dugouts require increased management during winter months

Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) consulting veterinarian Dr. Ray Fenton urges livestock producers who rely on snow as a source of water for their animals to understand that a reasonable quality and quantity of snow is required to facilitate proper digestion. "In general, a cow's daily water intake amounts to 10 per cent of its body weight. A 1,200 pound cows therefore needs 120 pounds of water or 12 gallons and it takes seven pails of snow to produce one pail of water."

Cattle and horses will experience malnutrition, weight loss and impaction when a sufficient water supply is not available.

Fenton warns producers to be wary of the threat of cattle breaking through the ice of dugouts, ponds and creeks. "Cattle will seek out water sources. They'll crowd onto the ice - anywhere they are used to getting water. They run the real risk of breaking through the ice and drowning. I support watering cattle through small water holes in a dugout but this process must be managed properly."

Fenton urges producers to manage the risk during the winter. He says the best method is a continuous water supply that is pumped and there are good systems readily available that operate at all times, without freezing.

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### **Clip No. 1:**

We're in the midst of the winter season and Alberta Farm Animal Care consulting veterinarian Dr. Ray Fenton, stresses livestock producers understand what is required when animals must derive their water source from snow. For example, when it comes to water a cow needs about 10 per cent of its body weight per day:

(17... "takes.")

Nursing cows should not be subjected to snow as a water source. Fenton advises that horses and cattle can experience malnutrition, weight loss and impaction if there is an inadequate supply of water. It's important to understand animals need to get enough snow to facilitate proper digestion.

### **Clip No. 2:**

Fenton warns of the dangers of dugouts, ponds and creeks during the winter because cattle will seek out water sources:

(26... "freezing.")

Fenton does support watering cattle though holes in dugouts but only in cases where the holes are small enough so that animals cannot fall through them. He emphasizes the need for a higher level of management.

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