



## It's Not Easy Being Cold

**It's not easy being cold - a letter from the editor of Hobby Farms.**

By Karen Keb Acevedo

We are at the end of our reprieve from Old Man Winter. He's just around the corner and if I'm honest, I'm not looking forward to his visit. The trees are naked, the goats are grouchy (especially at morning feed time), and getting dressed for the barn and for work takes a considerable amount of thought and time compared to the warmer months.

Then ... there's the hill. The long, steep hill that leads to my farm, which looks so lovely and charming during the other three seasons, shaded by beautifully arched trees, turns into an icy fortress come winter. After a freezing rain or snow, the road ices over quickly since it gets zero sunshine.

I'll usually sit in my vehicle for a few moments, idling at the bottom of the hill, weighing the odds of a successful journey to the top. Inevitably, I always end up giving it a shot rather than hiking the 14-mile uphill in slippery snow.

About half the time I make it, though my Jeep may slow to a crawl during the process. The other half of the time, I hit the steepest spot on the hill and my vehicle halts, its rear-wheel drive wheels spinning futilely and I start to backslide. Ugh. I really should do something about this.

As I read Cherie Langlois' "Here Comes Winter" on page 40, I began thinking of all sorts of things that make life more complicated in winter.

It seems like with global warming, the seasons just keep getting crazier and crazier, and extreme weather is the new norm. No one can ever assume immunity from it based on geography. Yes, we all know we should stock up on vital supplies—just in case—but do we?

Last year I purchased a propane heater; it still sits in the garage with a supply of fuel, waiting for its chance to perform. But I still haven't gotten serious with a generator—or a different vehicle, better equipped to handle my local terrain. One of Cherie's tips that I will put into practice immediately is to install gravel sacrifice areas for the animals to help alleviate mud problems.

While this all seems so bleak, there is an upside. Winter also means few or no outdoor chores (translates to less guilt); no bugs; the feel-good times of the holidays; and the chance to catch up on that pile of reading I've been meaning to tackle for the last few months. I'll also be harvesting fresh vegetables from my very first fall garden, which I'm planting now (in September) as I write this.

Christmas (or whichever winter holiday you celebrate) gives us the downtime to reflect and recharge with our families, and invites us to articulate exactly what it is we really want that will make our lives easier or give us peace of mind. Read "All I Want for Christmas ..." on page 48 to find out how your fellow farm hobbyists (as well as us HF editors) finished that sentence.

While winter is not easy and presents unique challenges, I can't help but utter the cliché "what doesn't kill us, makes us stronger" on more than one occasion. I'm sure I'll draw comfort from this in the coming months as my wheels spin and spin (and spin)!

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