



Protecting Giraffes in Cold Weather



Giraffes are more sensitive to cold temperatures (consistently below 50 °F) than other hoofed animals.

Giraffes do not develop a heavy layer of body fat or a warm winter coat. They also lose body heat more quickly due to the large surface area of their long necks and legs. This makes giraffes more susceptible to low body temperature, which may impair a giraffe's immune system and lead to sickness or even death.

HEATED BARN

Giraffes need continuous access to a heated barn (65 °F or higher) when outside temperatures consistently drop below 50 °F. It is important to measure barn temperature at the giraffe's chest level to ensure the warmth is reaching its body.



Measure barn temperature at giraffe's chest level



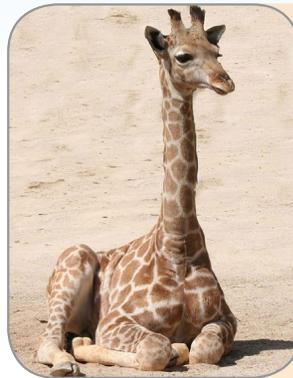
Barns with **heated floors** or **low heater vents** are best, as the heat will rise and warm the animal's legs and body. Heaters located at the top of a barn will warm a giraffe's head and neck, but may not properly warm its body. Placing fans at the top of the barn, well out of reach from the giraffes, will help to distribute the heat.



PRACTICAL TIP

Be safe! Be sure to check your barn heaters in late summer—before you need them—to make sure they are working properly. Remove any bird's nests, dust, or other flammable debris before turning them on.

COMPOUNDING RISK FACTORS



- Younger animals, especially calves and juveniles
- Geriatric animals
- Health issues
- Wet or windy weather conditions
- Inadequate diet

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

KEEPING YOUR GIRAFFES HEALTHY is an important part of protecting them. Healthy giraffes are less vulnerable to colder weather. Here are some ways you can help them thrive:

- Feed a diet designed for giraffes. Your veterinarian or a veterinary nutritionist can help you create the optimal diet.
- Provide regular veterinary care.
- Avoid overcrowding or housing giraffes with incompatible herd-mates.
- Maintain social bonds by grouping giraffes with others they prefer (females especially will show a preference).

This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about the physical and behavioral health of animals. Refer to the other topics in the series for more information.

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

ANIMAL CARE AID

