Winter flock checklist

Get the coop ready before the first hard freeze.

Fluff & Feed

Air and drafts

- [ ] Vents up high, near the roof, with a way in and a way out for air (Wisconsin Extension)
- [ ] Vents covered with sturdy wire
- [ ] Gaps that blow onto the roosts sealed (Maryland Extension)
- [ ] No frost or wet walls on a cold morning. If there is, add airflow

Bedding

- [ ] 4 to 6 inches of straw or pine shavings down
- [ ] Board across the doorway to hold deep bedding in (Minnesota Extension)
- [ ] Wet patches taken out, top stirred, fresh bedding added

Water

- [ ] Heated waterer or heated base ready, on a GFCI outlet, away from bedding
- [ ] Spare waterer for swapping a frozen one
- [ ] Plan to check water several times a day in a cold snap. Without water, chickens stop eating (Minnesota Extension)

Roosts

- [ ] Wooden roosts, not metal or plastic pipe
- [ ] 9 to 12 inches of roost per bird (UNH Extension)
- [ ] Roosts at least 12 inches off the floor (Minnesota Extension)

Feed and grit

- [ ] Extra feed on hand. Hens can eat up to 25% more in cold weather (Minnesota and UNH Extension)
- [ ] Feed in a container that keeps out water and rodents
- [ ] Grit out all winter

Light, eggs and doors

- [ ] If adding light, a timer that adds it in the morning, not the evening
- [ ] Collect eggs more often so they don't freeze
- [ ] Small gaps sealed against raccoons (Wisconsin Extension)
- [ ] Coop closed at dusk, or the automatic door checked

Through the winter

- [ ] Combs checked on very cold nights. Frostbite turns tips gray, then black. Ask your vet about any you find

Sources: WI, MD, MN and NH extension services