

Hi guys!

I hope you're all ready for and enjoying the holidays! Here in southwest WA state we've been hit with Arctic type weather. Where Allen and I live we are dodging it even though chains on vehicles are recommended only a few miles south and north of us. Did it ever catch us!...Friday.

We've lost power other years and that is my biggest concern...along with having plenty of food for us, but especially for all the flock and other animals. The last time we were without power was for 8 days, and that's a long time for food to sit unrefrigerated.

As winter approaches, here are some things that we have done to help be as prepared as we can to take care of our flock:

- Have a generator and plenty of fuel to run it in case of power outage. Ours generator can safely run 2 portable heaters and a lamp which we put in the bird room.
- Keep blinds, drapes etc closed to help hold heat in and cold out.
- IF you are in the middle of a big storm or know one is en route, you can turn your heat up in order to start out a little warmer if you do lose power. I don't suggest keeping the heat turned up high for days. If the house is really warm then power is lost and the temperature drops, you want the birds to be at least a little acclimated. If you have birds that have a difficult time thermoregulating (feather-picked or ill), it's really critical to keep them from substantial temperature changes.
- Empty plastic milk jugs can be filled with hot water, wrapped in a towel and placed near cages. Be sure your bird can't make a bird toy out of it, chewing it up! These bottles can help provide some extra heat if you've got a way to keep water warm.
- Have plenty of pellets, seed and nuts on hand. Have at least an extra week or more supply on hand. In cooler temperatures birds burn more calories to keep warm so adding a few more nuts and seed to their diet temporarily may be helpful.
- I feed my guys mash and fresh food because I have a few birds that cannot eat pellets. I cook lots of grains/legumes mixtures and freeze in 2-day proportions. These freeze really solid so even if we lose power they'll likely remain frozen for a week to 10 days if kept in the freezer. If you live in a cold climate, your frozen foods can also be put into a closed cooler or other protected container and put outside! Just make certain that this container is safe from dogs, raccoons, foxes, coyote or other hungry animals.
- Neither TGF nor I recommend feeding canned food to our birds, due to high salt and sugar content, but for an emergency I do keep some in stock. I l corn that does not contain salt. Also canned squash: butternut and pumpkin, and purchased canned sweet potato and yams too...nothing has been added to them. Another option could be organic jarred baby food, like veggies, fruit and lentils. Even though these

are baby foods be sure to check for salt or other additives important to avoid with our birds. You can also keep some freeze-dried vegetables and fruits on hand - the Just Tomatoes brand is a wonderful brand and is found at stores like Whole Foods and other health food grocers.

- Whole grain pastas and whole grain organic cereals preferably without a lot of synthetic supplementation in them, are also staples to have on hand in case of emergency.
- Make sure that you have bottled water in the event that fresh water is unavailable. Even keeping some baby sized bottles of juice in the pantry can provide a bit of instant energy to a bird in need.
- Have your bird's emergency kit handy and up to date. Be sure to have your vet's phone number handy. Make sure your cell phone is completely charged prior to any storm/threat of a power outage.
- If it becomes very cold, keeping your birds in their carriers can help to keep them warmer since they'll be in a confined space. Make sure that your carriers have dishes, a perch and maybe a toy or two just in case! Keeping a supply of old sheets or blankets can be helpful if shelter from the cold is needed.
- Have tire chains handy and check what shape they're in prior to a storm. Keep your car fueled up. Make sure you have flashlights, extra batteries and even battery powered lamps available. Keep a battery radio handy in the event that any Internet electronic device fails.
- If you haven't done so yet, have your furnace checked for functionality. Make certain the filters are clean and that your furnace is operating efficiently.
- If you use a fireplace or wood-burning stove or other fuel-fired heat, make certain that the chimney and flue are in excellent repair and have no soot buildup that could prove harmful to your birds.
- Remember, NO kerosene, charcoal or other non-indoor heater should ever be used around your birds - the consequences could be fatal for you and your flock.

Happy Winter Holidays to you all.