

WINTERIZE

AND CARE FOR FARMSTEAD EQUIPMENT



Winter puts bigger loads on starting systems and low temperatures reduce the amount of current your battery can produce. With shorter running times, there is more chance of discharging batteries. Discharged batteries are more apt to freeze. Check the voltage regulator if batteries don't stay charged. Keeping water level up helps your batteries stay in working condition. Notice how this farmer cleaned battery terminals and smeared with grease to prevent corrosion.

Each year, it seems, there is more equipment of one sort or another around the farmstead to make chore work easier. This equipment must have good care if it is to give long, trouble-free service.

Some farmstead tools are used year-around while others stand idle through the winter season. These latter items need special care as they may suffer more from lack of use than do the machines used every day. Metal parts polished smooth by use are especially susceptible to corrosion. Old, dry grease is of little protection from rust.

A generous greasing will help protect bearings and shafts during storage. Dirt and chaff draw moisture to make ideal conditions for rust and corrosion. An air compressor can be very handy for the fall cleanup. Exposed sheet metal will last almost forever if it is painted or protected with a rust inhibitor before storing away. Places like the bottoms of elevator troughs can be coated with used crankcase oil applied with an old paint brush.

Storing under roof is most desirable but not always practical. The next best thing is to protect the parts of the machines most susceptible to damage from the weather. Motors can often be easily removed and stored in the shop or machine shed. Belts should be removed and hung up inside. Chains coiled in a can of lightweight lube oil will come out next summer in perfect shape. Where it isn't practical to remove motors and drives, a box or waterproof cover will help give needed protection.

Now that the seasonal equipment is taken care of, let's turn to the dozens of big and little tools that work for us every day during the winter or feeding seasons.

Electric motors used outside or in damp places should be totally enclosed or drip-proof models. Switches and motors must be safe from possible explosion hazards, due to dust, chaff or fuel fumes. Drives and working parts of all machines, motors and equipment should be shielded from adverse conditions.

More and more new equipment is being built with "life-time lubricated" bearings. These are good but should be examined at least once a year. Some can be lubricated eventually while others may have to be replaced. Check for the "old-fashioned" grease zerks and oil holes that need service. Gasoline engines on elevators, combines, balers, etc., need servicing just like tractors or trucks for winter weather. New spark plugs, winter weight oil and a general cleanup will help engines start easier.

Winter-time breakage is often due to lack of care in stopping and starting equipment like bunk conveyors or barn cleaners that may be frozen. When stopping, always give the device a chance to clear of material that could block or make restarting difficult. If there is any chance of freezeup, always start the equipment slowly and be ready to cut the power if things are stuck. Be careful with hot water for thawing. It's apt to crack castings. A little salt will often do the job.

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