

# Frost Misses Crops, But Raises Red Flags For Cattlemen, Poultry Producers

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

For once, freezing temperatures didn't cause Arkansas' row crop growers to lose any sleep, but it's a different story for cattle and poultry producers.

The National Weather Service posted freeze warnings Monday and Tuesday nights. Temperatures are expected to warm toward the weekend.

"Practically all of the soybean acreage is beyond the point where freezing temperatures will cause any problems," said Jeremy Ross, extension soybean agronomist and assistant professor for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "Approximately 60 percent of the soybean acreage has been harvested as of Monday, and I would imagine most of the remaining 40 percent will be harvested in the next 10 days."

The story was much the same for other row crops.

Jason Kelley, extension agronomist for wheat and feed grains, and assistant professor for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

"Corn and grain sorghum is harvested or harvest is nearly completed," he said. As for winter wheat, the freezing temperatures will not have an impact on the crop.

However, for livestock producers the cold brings other concerns.

"The poultry industry will be using more fuel to keep birds warm so it will be increasing production costs," said Susan Watkins, extension poultry specialist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "Producers need to be wary of skimping on heat for young birds because a cold environment can impact health,

weight gains and feed conversion."

The bottom line: "Work on tightening up the barns to assure minimum heat loss," she said.

However, for cattlemen, frost is no small thing.

"With the onset of a killing frost, prussic acid poisoning becomes a concern to cattle producers," said Dr. Tom Troxel, the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture's associate department head for animal science. "Prussic acid is generally found in stressed plants and can cause rapid death in cattle."

Prussic acid poisoning occurs when drought or cold puts stress on certain plants. In Arkansas, plants of the sorghum family are most likely to contain potentially toxic levels of prussic acid, including grain sorghum johnsongrass, sorghum-sudan hybrids and sudangrass.

However, "wild cherry trees can produce toxic levels, and prussic acid poisoning can occur when cattle consume wilted leaves after trees have been damaged by storms or pruning."

Silage may contain toxic quantities of prussic acid, but it usually escapes as a gas. If frosted forage is ensiled, allow fermentation to take place for at least six to eight weeks before feeding.

"Animals affected by prussic acid poisoning may be treated with a sodium nitrite-sodium thiosulfate combination," he said. "It must be injected intravenously and very slowly.

"The dosage and method of administration are critical," Troxel said, adding that producers should consult a veterinarian for diagnosis and proper treatment. △