

Estill County Farm Scoop

Agriculture & Natural Resources

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Cooperative Extension Service

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The 2023-2024 Winter Outlook for Kentucky

Derrick Snyder – National Weather Service, Paducah, KY

As the leaves change colors and fall to the ground, crops are harvested, and tendrils of frost form on plants, conversation often turns to what the coming winter will bring. As we have seen, winter in Kentucky can bring a bit of everything, from ice and snow, to flooding, to bitter cold - even severe weather. Given how variable the weather during the winter can be, is it possible to predict what will happen? Many of us have heard homespun wisdom about ways to predict what an upcoming winter will bring. Some of the more popular ones include how dark the hair of a wooly worm is in the fall, the shape of the seed inside

of a persimmon, and counting the number of morning fogs in August. Unfortunately, these tales are not necessarily based in truth. The National Weather Service has a division called the Climate Prediction Center (CPC). The climatologists use historical data and pattern recognition, along with latest trends and observations, to predict a seasonal outlook. This past month, CPC just issued the outlook for the upcoming 2023/2024 Winter Season. So how does it shake out? The winter outlook compiled by CPC covers the months of December, January, and February...
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It is not possible to give a day by day forecast of what will happen, but it is possible to forecast whether a region will see a greater chance of above-, below-, or near-normal temperatures and precipitation (rain and melted snow and ice). If there is not a strong signal either way, the outlook will say that a region will have an equal chance of seeing above-, below-, or near-normal temperatures and precipitation. It is important to remember that these outlooks cover a three-month period. Periods of cold weather can occur when above-normal temperatures are favored, and the opposite can happen when below-normal temperatures are favored. The same rule also applies for precipitation.

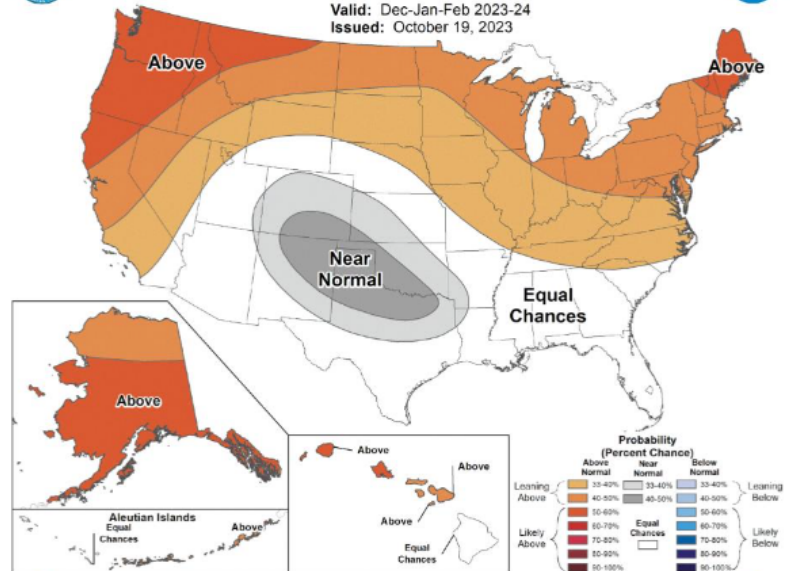
This year, the United States is entering into a strong El Niño pattern. During El Niño, trade winds weaken in the Pacific Ocean. Warm water is pushed back east, toward the west coast of the Americas. El Niño means Little Boy in Spanish. South American fishermen first noticed periods of unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean in the 1600s. The full name they used was El Niño de Navidad, because El Niño typically peaks around December. El Niño can affect our weather significantly. The warmer waters cause the Pacific jet stream to move south of its neutral position. With this shift, areas in the northern U.S. and Canada are dryer and warmer than usual. But in the U.S. Gulf Coast and Southeast, these periods are wetter than usual and have increased flooding.

In Kentucky, the outlook for this winter slightly favors above-normal temperatures across the entire state. For precipitation, the great majority of the state has an equal chance of seeing above-, below-, or near-normal precipitation. However, across far northern Kentucky, the outlook does slightly favor below-normal precipitation amounts. How will this end up playing out over the winter? – We shall have to wait and see!



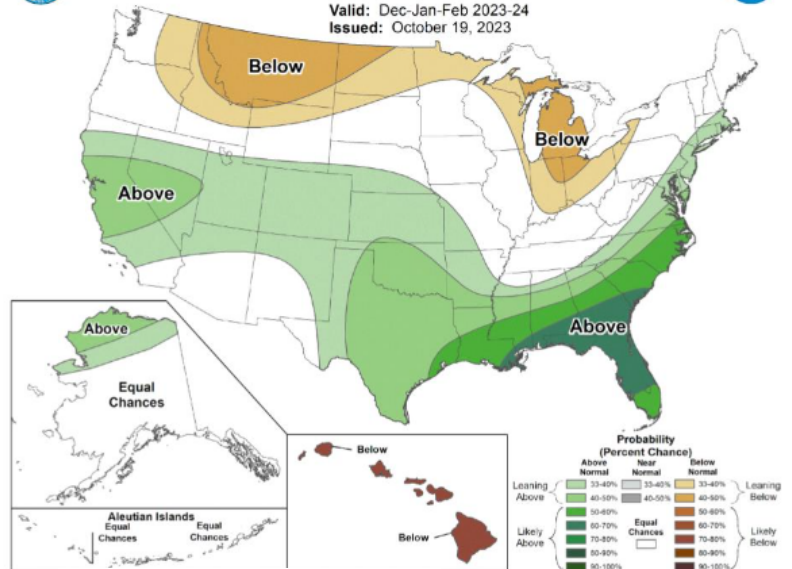
Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: Dec-Jan-Feb 2023-24
Issued: October 19, 2023



Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

Valid: Dec-Jan-Feb 2023-24
Issued: October 19, 2023



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To file a complaint of discrimination, contact Tim West, UK College of Agriculture, 859-257-3879; Terry Allen or Patty Bender, UK Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity, 859-257-8927; or the USDA, Director Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Bldg., 14th & Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 (202-720-5961).



Keep Your Chickens Healthy This Winter

Source: Jacqueline Jacob, agriculture extension project manager

Keeping your chickens happy and healthy in the winter is important, but maintaining a cozy and vigorous flock during the colder months demands diligent care. Chickens, which typically have an internal temperature around 106 degrees Fahrenheit, may experience cold stress when the environment's chill overwhelms their heat-generating capabilities. Indications that your chickens might be feeling the cold include behaviors like feather fluffing, huddling and tucking one foot up to their body for warmth. When such stress is prolonged, it can impair their well-being and could be fatal.

When considering your flock, it's vital to recognize that not all breeds are equally winter-resistant. Heavier breeds, such as the Plymouth Rock or Orpington, tend to endure cold better than their lighter counterparts or those with substantial combs and wattles, which are susceptible to frostbite. Monitoring the flock dynamics, especially if diverse breeds are present, is crucial since bullying over resources can leave some chickens malnourished and more vulnerable to the cold. Preparing your coop for the winter is fundamental. It should be a sanctuary, protecting against elements and predators alike. Roosts are essential, providing an elevated perch that shields them from the cold ground and also allow the feet to dry better.

These should be crafted from materials like wood, avoiding metal or plastic, which can aggravate the cold. Perches should be spacious to prevent overcrowding, but cozy enough to allow shared body heat. Managing airflow is essential; you must ensure adequate ventilation to prevent the buildup of harmful ammonia and moisture accumulation. Chickens can withstand relatively cold temperatures as long as they are dry. You may need to insulate the coop to keep the warmth in. On below freezing nights, it may be necessary to provide supplemental heat. Historically, infrared heat lamps have been used to provide supplemental heat, but they can be a major fire risk. Alternative heat sources that have lower fire risk are now available. Use only equipment designed for livestock, and always have installations carried out by a professional.

Regarding nutrition, chickens' dietary intake tends to increase during winter since they require more energy to keep warm. Treats like scratch grains are beneficial for their warmth-inducing digestion and as an activity stimulant, but should be offered sparingly and never mixed with a complete, nutritionally balanced feed as it would dilute nutrients. Ensuring continuous access to unfrozen water is equally important because chickens will not eat if they cannot drink. Egg production might dip due to reduced daylight; therefore, some opt for supplementary lighting to stimulate laying. It is important that the number of light hours per day never decreases during egg production. A minimum of 14 light hours per day (no more than 18) is recommended to maintain egg production throughout the year.

Tending to chickens in winter revolves around striking a delicate balance: ensuring they're warm but not overheated, well-fed but not overindulged and active yet secure from the harsh external environment. With meticulous planning and proactive management, your poultry can thrive even when the temperatures drop.

More information on caring for chickens and other livestock is available at the Estill County Extension office.

Winter Water Reminders for Livestock

Source: Jeff Lehmkuhler, UK extension beef specialist

As temperatures get colder, most producers begin to focus their attention on getting stored forages to their animals. It's also a good time to remember available water for livestock in the winter is critical to health and survival. Winter brings challenges of battling frozen waterers and frozen plumbing. Another factor is that animals may consume less water in the winter for a variety of reasons including environmental temperature, feed moisture, body size and level of milk production. During cold weather, your animals' energy requirements will increase so they can maintain their body temperature. To meet that extra demand, you will likely increase their dry matter intake, if they can physically consume more feed. Water intake will affect their dry matter intake. If water sources are limited or frozen, animals won't be able to compensate for the colder temperatures. You have several options to deliver clean, fresh water to livestock, even on the coldest days of the year. Think about your actual water source. Are you using natural surface water sources? Do you have waterers installed or are you thinking of installing them? Surface water presents challenges that will require more work. You have to make sure the water quality downstream is good and that streambank quality is preserved. You'll also have to check them often to make sure the surface is not frozen. Large storage tanks are an option, but they still require frequent checks for ice. You could install a continuous flow valve in a storage tank to prevent freezing, but you'll have to have an overflow directing water away from the tank to prevent excessive mud. If you have electricity available at the winter feeding site, you have a great number of watering options.

You can add an electric heater to almost any watering system. If electricity is not available, you could research ways to harvest geothermal heat. A variety of watering systems on the market harvest geothermal heat from the ground below the tank, keeping water thawed and available to livestock even in the coldest of environments. Most of these waterers use heat tubes buried deep into the ground, allowing for geothermal heat to rise and keep water supply lines and the drinking trough thawed. While these systems do a good job of keeping pipes and floats from freezing they are not ice-free. Depending on the amount of animal traffic using the waterer and environmental temperature, you may still need to remove a thin layer of ice over the drinking area on very cold days. Regardless of the method you choose, your animals need clean, fresh and available water this winter.

For more information on livestock water and nutrition requirements, contact the Estill County Cooperative Extension Service.





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HOLIDAY HOUSEPLANT WORKSHOP

December 4th at 6 pm

Join ANR agent, Emma Lee, to make your own live succulent arrangement that will live long past the holidays. If you would like to attend this workshop, **you must sign up and pay a \$5 fee in order to attend.** Call (606) 723-4557 to sign up today! Space is limited for this workshop.



Emma Lee

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Estill County Cattlemen's Meeting

Tuesday, December 14th at 6:00 pm



The Estill County Cattlemen's Association will meet on December 14th at 6:00 pm. This meeting will include officer elections and a meal. Call the Estill County Extension Office at (606) 723-4557 to let us know you will be attending so we can get an appropriate count for the meal.

Meeting will be held at
Estill County Extension Office
76 Golden Court, Irvine, KY

On-Farm Composting Workshop

Climate Smart Strategies For Soil Health, Sustainability, and Savings on Inputs

Join us to learn best practices for composting and composting certifications. Farmers, ranchers, and others interested will learn about marketing, compost quality, and more!

WHEN: December 6th - 8th

WHERE: Kentucky State University Research Farm and
Cooperative Extension Building - Main Campus

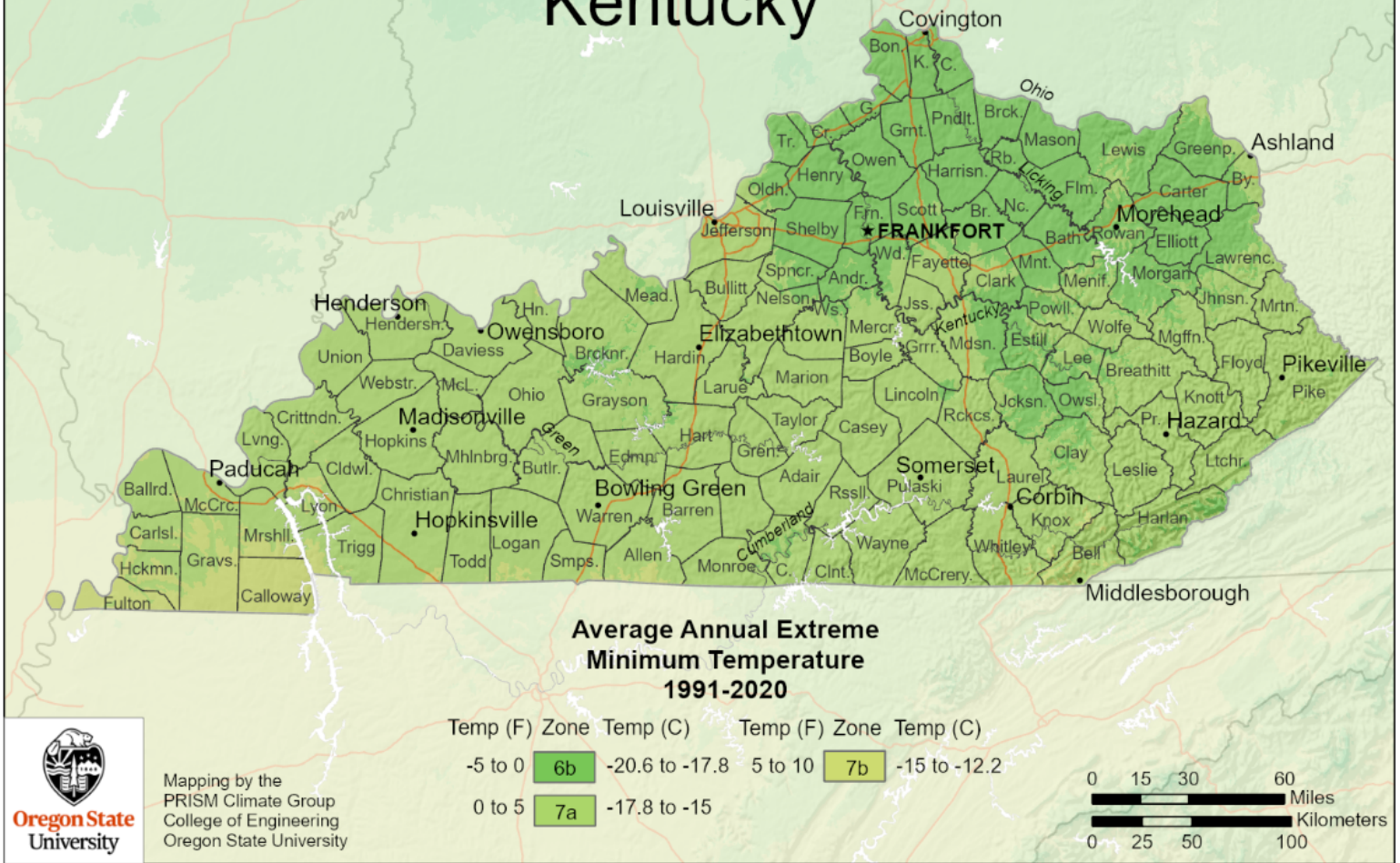


Registration is \$10



<https://tinyurl.com/compost-workshop>

2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map Kentucky



2024 KENTUCKY FRUIT & VEGETABLE CONFERENCE

Jan. 3rd-4th, 2024
Pre-conference events Jan. 2nd

Sloan Convention Center
Bowling Green, Kentucky

Estill County
76 Golden Court
Irvine, KY 40336

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Baked Apples and Sweet Potatoes

5 medium sweet potatoes	1/2 cup margarine	1 teaspoon nutmeg
4 medium apples	1/2 cup brown sugar	1/4 cup hot water
	1/2 teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons honey

- 1. Boil** potatoes in 2 inches of water until almost tender.
- 2. Cool** potatoes, peel and slice. **Peel**, core and slice apples.
- 3. Preheat** the oven to 400°F. **Grease** a casserole dish with a small amount of margarine.
- 4. Layer** potatoes on the bottom of the dish.
- 5. Add** a layer of apple slices.
- 6. Sprinkle** some sugar, salt, and tiny pieces of margarine over the apple layer.
- 7. Repeat** layers of potatoes, apples, sugar, salt and margarine.
- 8. Sprinkle** top with nutmeg.
- 9. Mix** the hot water and honey together.
- 10. Pour** over top of casserole.
- 11. Bake** for 30 minutes. **Yield:** 6, 1 cup servings.

Nutrition Analysis: 300 calories, 8 g fat, 59 g carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol, 320 mg sodium.
Source: USDA Food Stamp Nutrition Connection, Recipe Finder, June, 2008.



Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmer's market, or roadside stand.



For more Plate it up recipes visit
<https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/plate-it-kentucky-proud>