

Severe Weather- RSPCA Launches Farm Animal Welfare Hotline

The RSPCA and NFU (National Farmers Union) are joining forces to help farmers and their animals caught in the snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures that have brought parts of the country to its knees.

The RSPCA announced today that it is launching a new Farm Animal Welfare Hotline. All calls will be handled by the Society's National Control Centre and if necessary passed onto frontline RSPCA staff to assess what help is needed.

"The extreme cold and bad weather conditions could have a massive impact on farm animals. We are committed to doing everything we can to assist them, and hope this hotline will be a real help for farmers who find themselves in difficulties," said Tim Wass, chief officer of the RSPCA inspectorate.

"The RSPCA is already working closely with the NFU to offer assistance, if required, if livestock welfare is at high risk,' he added.

NFU livestock board chairman Alistair Mackintosh said: "While farmers are very resilient and are used to coping with extreme weather conditions the current bad weather has left some facing difficult situations. The welfare of their livestock is of paramount importance to farmers and, while they are working hard to carry on as normal, anything that gives them an additional helping hand in these extreme conditions is welcome."

Farmers and livestock owners with severe animal welfare problems can now call the RSPCA Farm Animal Welfare Hotline on **0300 1238424**.

Situations where animals are stranded and cannot be reached to feed them, power cuts to intensive units, difficulties getting feed delivered all threaten animal welfare and the situation can become critical. The aim is to try to solve the issue before the animals suffer.

The RSPCA has frontline staff trained in both farm animal welfare and biosecurity who can visit and offer practical help