

So How Do They Like This Weather?

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(EMAILWIRE.COM, February 06, 2007) San Angelo, TX -- "So how do they like this weather?" It doesn't matter if the weather in question is blazing hot or freezing cold, it's a question every emu farmer gets asked at some point during the year. As snow blankets most of the nation, emu farmers are doing their best to make sure their livelihood makes it through the winter months with minimal discomfort and weight loss.

Like any other livestock, the further north you go, the more shelter is needed. In the far south emu may shelter under pole barns or beside a hay bale while in the far north they winter in barns. "It is pretty much the same as cattle," reported De McCleery, American Emu Association Ag Committee Chair. McCleery went on to say that where necessary farmers put down crushed barn lime or sand to prevent the big birds slipping on ice. The most popular bedding seems to be straw. "In farming you have to plan ahead. Do I want to go out each day and chop ice out of the water trough or do I want to run electricity out and put in a heater? Do I want to haul feed each day or use a gravity feeder?" said McCleery. "Farmers make decisions that are proactive, not reactive."

One important proactive decision is the feed. "From May to September emu should be on a high carbohydrate diet to help put on that important layer of fat," said McCleery. "Around October the breeders are switched to a high protein feed while yearlings remain on a high carbohydrate diet." Breeding season combined with harsh weather would be a lot rougher without a layer of fat to help the birds through winter. During breeding season, feed consumption drops and egg production begins. Emu are generally processed at 14 to 16 months for their lean Heart Healthy™ red meat, but farmers also market several valuable food by-products. This includes the fat; which is refined into an omega rich oil; the hide, which is made into beautiful leather products; and the feathers, which are used in the fashion and craft industry.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, emu are being raised on over 5,000 farms across the country. Many of these farms sell their finished, consumer ready products online or at local farmers markets.

The American Emu Association is a non-profit trade association representing the emu industry. The emu industry is an alternative agricultural industry, dominated by the small farmer, who is devoted to humane and environmentally positive practices that will produce beneficial products for society. For more information about the American Emu Association (AEA) or the emu industry visit www.aea-emu.org or call 541-332-0675.

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