

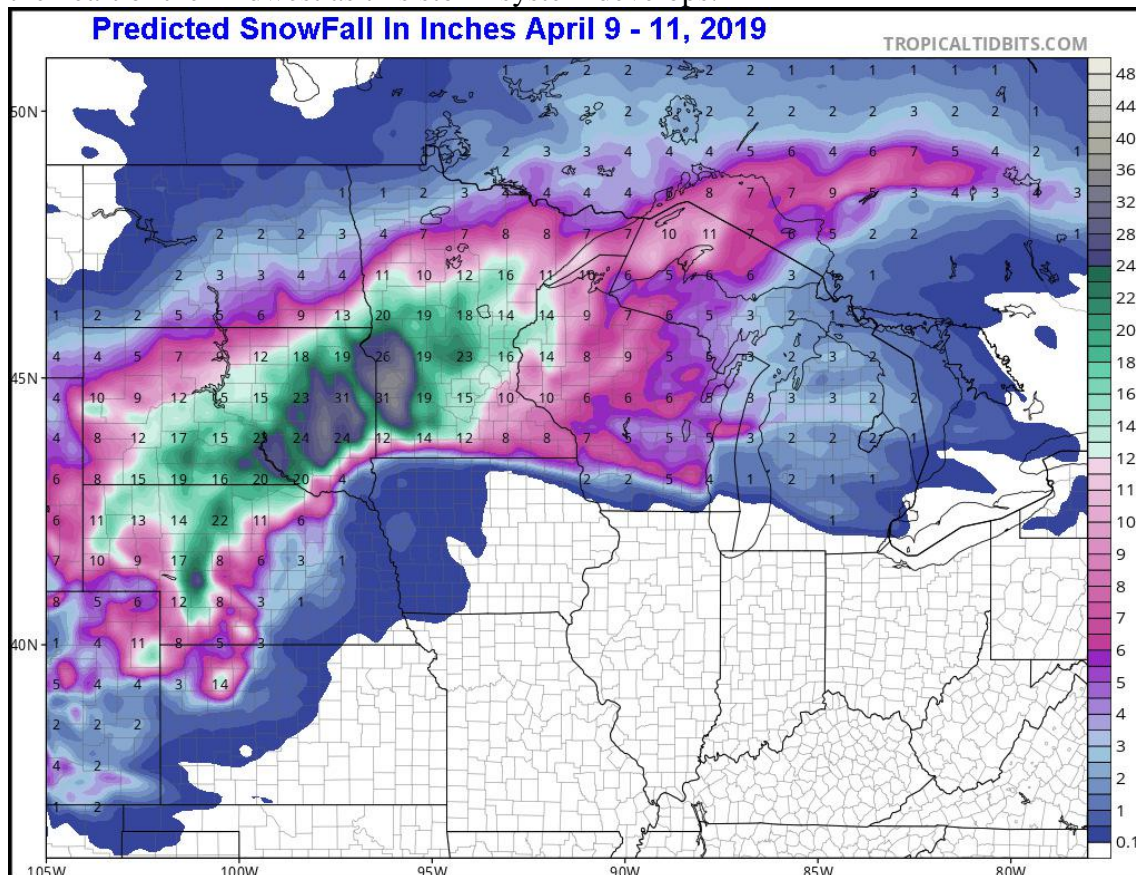
North-Central U.S. Ranchers Scramble To Protect Livestock

By Drew Lerner

Kansas City, April 10 (World Weather Inc.) – *Livestock owners and Ranchers from Wyoming and Colorado through South Dakota and Nebraska to Minnesota and Wisconsin have been scrambling over the past few days moving their herds to places of safety ahead of this week's snowstorm. There has been plenty of warning about the impending storm and the advanced warning should help to reduce the impact on that industry, but the storm will still be a threat.* In the meantime, travel across the interior northern Plains and upper Midwest is likely to come to a near standstill tonight, Thursday and early morning Friday.

Livestock are always vulnerable to extreme weather and this winter has certainly been wild for the northern and central Plains and upper Midwest. Today's developing storm is similar to the one that occurred a few weeks ago that got labeled "the bomb" because of a low pressure center that developed very aggressively over a short 24 hour period. The same phenomenon is under way today with increasing wind speed across the central and interior northern parts of the Plains in response to a rapidly intensifying low pressure center.

Wind speeds this afternoon through Thursday in Colorado, northwestern Kansas and parts of western Nebraska will become sustained at 25 to 40 mph with gusts over 60 mph. The wind will occur while precipitation in the forms of rain and snow evolve across the region. Gusty wind speeds are also expected in the southern Plains and as far to the east and the heart of the Midwest as this storm system develops.



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Wind is not usually a big issue for livestock, but transportation can be negatively impacted at times especially for high profile vehicles. However, adding cold rain and heavy wet snow to the wind can cause a considerable amount of stress for animals. The driving wet snow will be quick to pile up on their backs adding a tremendous amount of weight and when moving around in the ever-increasing snow depths becomes difficult too the animals may choose to lie down and that usually leads to a problem because getting up becomes extremely difficult. As the heavy snow continues to fall animals on the ground can suffocate from the heavy snow piling up on them and increasing difficulty breathing in this environment.

Ranchers and livestock owners have likely been working hard in the past few days to round up their herds and get them to a place of either adequate protection from the storm or (at the bare minimum) move them to a place where access to them might not be as challenging as trying to find them somewhere in the open prairie. Access roads may close making it difficult for ranchers to get to their herds for emergency care.

The peak of this week's storm will occur Thursday into Friday morning, but conditions will steadily deteriorate tonight. The area of greatest concern for livestock will cover the region from eastern Wyoming and northeastern Colorado through northwestern Kansas and much of western, central and northern Nebraska to South Dakota and much of Minnesota. Central and northwestern Wisconsin will also have some issues with livestock and travel.

Air transportation across the interior northern Plains and upper Midwest will be hampered as well with airport closures likely across most of the impacted area. However, the Minneapolis hub is likely to have the greatest ripple effect of slowing or canceling air travel across many areas in the United States. Conditions in Minneapolis may not be as bad as in some other areas to the west and north.

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