



ENERGY EFFICIENCY



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SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT: **HEAT LAMPS**

Tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor

In recent years, Firelands has noticed a growing number of members dabbling in homesteading. Whether it's chickens, dogs, goats, or other small livestock, your monthly electric bill could be affected — especially in the winter.

Colder weather often results in poultry or small herds being moved indoors to keep them warm and comfortable. It's also very common for members to add one or more heat lamps.

Clear or red in color, the bulbs in these lamps range from 150 to 250 watts each and are often screwed into a clamp-on style portable lamp equipped with a metal reflector.

Useful for warming a garage, shed, or section of a barn, these bulbs use infrared heating technology, which warms the object under it and not the surrounding air. While they can work well and are a quick and easy way to supply spot heat to livestock or a water line, it is important to note that heat lamp bulbs do have some cost and safety considerations to keep in mind.

The most common bulb I find installed in heat lamps during my energy consultations is the 250-watt version. One of these bulbs operating 24 hours a day can cost almost \$1 per day. This may not sound that alarming, but over the course of a month that adds up to almost \$30 per bulb per month. In other words, the average monthly operating cost for a three-bulb set up that runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is nearly \$100!

Besides operating costs, another factor to consider is the safety of heat lamps. These lamps are often set up to use the small, light-gauge extension cords intended for

standard, household lamps or indoor Christmas lights. Because this type of cord is rated for only 60 or 100 watts, using a high-wattage infrared heat lamp bulb with one can easily cause it to overheat and pose a fire hazard.

OSU Extension offers several additional heat lamp safety tips:

- Install fixtures securely and far enough away from animals to ensure that they will not be able to knock them loose. It's recommended to maintain at least a 20-inch distance between your livestock and the lamp.
- Since these bulbs heat surfaces and objects, do not point or mount them too close to anything flammable.
- Purchase only high-quality bulbs. Some no-name or off-brand bulbs found online are made with thinner glass, creating a shatter risk.
- Periodically shut the lamp off to make sure it is securely screwed into the base.
- If heat lamps are used in a basement or attached garage, adding an additional smoke detector in the area is highly recommended.
- Heat lamp bulbs located outdoors should be rated for outdoor use.

So you might be asking, if you want to avoid the use of infrared heat lamps, what can you do to keep your animals safe and warm? Weatherizing or air sealing the area where livestock is housed during the winter (as much as safely possible) is probably the most cost-effective option. Even if this doesn't completely eliminate the need for heat lamps, it may at least reduce the number required.

For additional agriculture-related safety tips from OSU, visit <https://agsafety.osu.edu>.