Damages to Arkansas Agriculture from the January 23-27, 2026 Winter Storm

James L. Mitchell, Ryan Loy, Shelby Rider, and Shane Gadberry

Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness Department
and the
Fryar Price Risk Management Center of Excellence,
Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture Food & Life Sciences
and
University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

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Beginning January 23, 2026, a severe winter storm impacted much of Arkansas, bringing extreme cold, ice, and snowfall that disrupted livestock operations, crop production, and agricultural infrastructure across the state. Following the storm, James Mitchell and Ryan Loy with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, conducted a survey of county Extension agents to document and assess agricultural damages associated with the event.

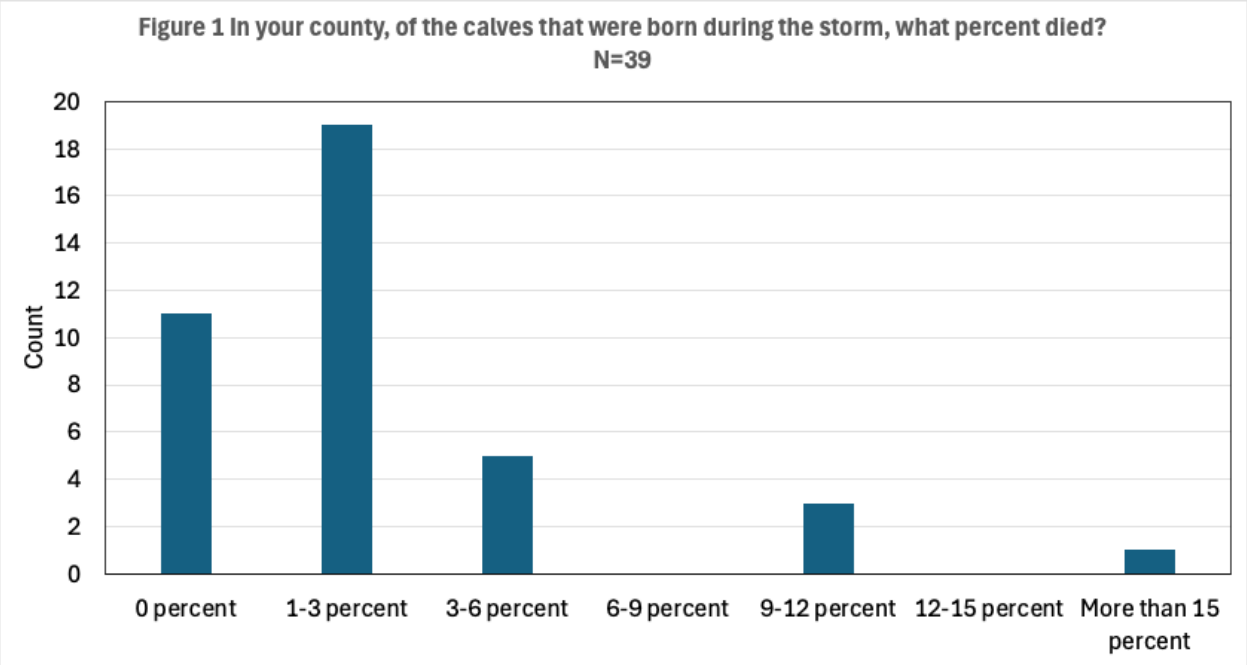
The survey asked county agents to report observed impacts related to livestock morbidity and mortality, emergency hay and feed use, delayed poultry and livestock marketing, specialty crop yield losses, aquaculture losses, and damage to agricultural structures and facilities. Agents were also provided an opportunity to report additional storm-related damages.

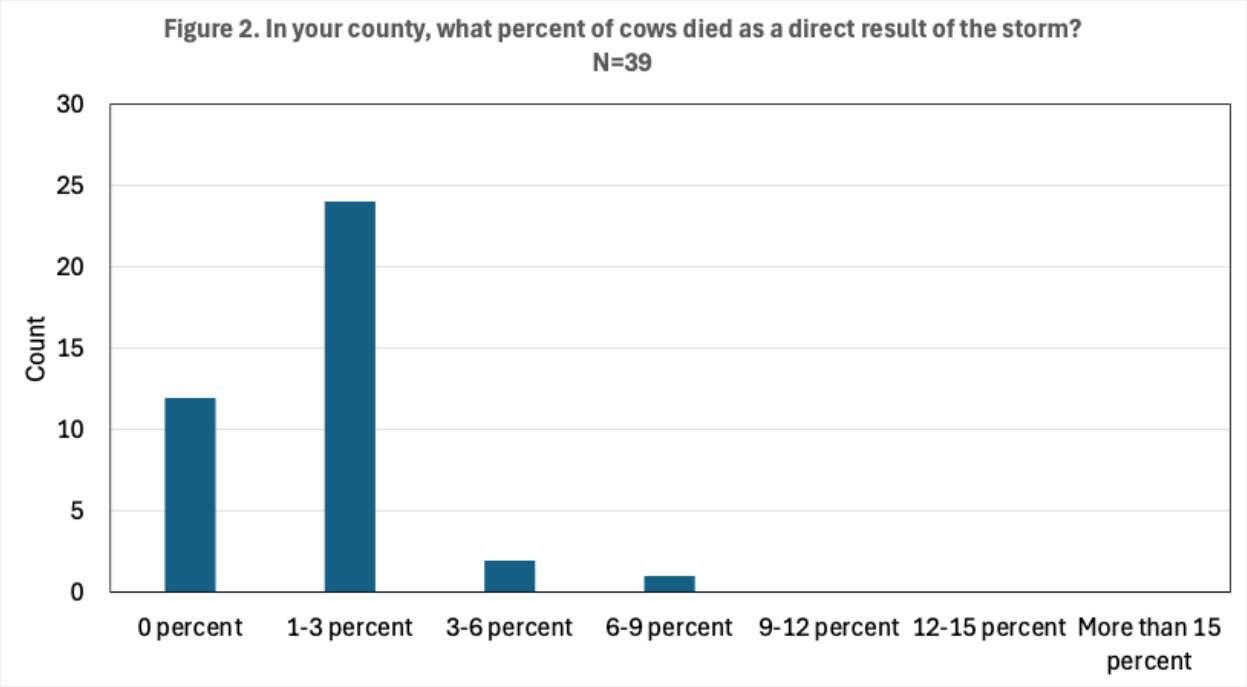
This report summarizes county agent responses associated with the January 23–27, 2026 winter storm and provides preliminary, commodity-specific estimates of agricultural impacts across Arkansas.

Cattle and Calves

The survey asked county agents about calf and cow mortality rates, which ranged from 0 to 15 percent. Figures 1 and 2 provide respondent frequency counts for mortality rates. Using a weighted average of responses, calf and cow mortality during the winter storm were 2.74 percent and 1.65 percent, respectively. Based on inventory estimates from the USDA-NASS January 2026 cattle inventory report and average market prices from USDA-AMS, cattle losses in Arkansas from the winter storm total $24.8 million. These losses do not account for reproductive losses for herd bulls impacted by the storm, which we expect are minimal.

The survey also included questions about hay and supplement feed use. Responses indicate that, on average, Arkansas cattle producers fed 2.2 times as much hay as they normally would in January. Similarly, cattle producers fed 1.9 times as much grain and protein supplement. Based on 2026 Arkansas cattle inventory estimates and per head cow costs from enterprise budgets, hay and feed costs increased by $7.52 million during the winter storm. These losses to not account for the increase in future costs from depleted hay stocks.





Sheep and Goats

Arkansas has approximately 34,100 goats and kids, primarily meat goats, and 32,485 sheep and lambs, primarily hair sheep. Survey results indicate that approximately 2% of lambs and kids born during the storm died, and 1.3% of the sheep and goat inventory also died. Estimating the market value of these losses is more challenging because available sheep and goat inventory data only report total head counts and do not distinguish animals by class (e.g., bucks, does/nannies, and kids). Based on these survey

results and inventory totals, we estimate that approximately 800–900 head of sheep and goats died during the winter storm in Arkansas. The estimated market value of these losses ranges from $151,200 to $170,100. In addition to death losses, surveyed responses also reported having to feed, on average, approximately twice as much hay during the winter storm.

Poultry

The poultry industry experienced the greatest losses in Arkansas among all livestock and crop sectors. These losses include large bird losses and destroyed/damaged poultry houses. A key challenge in quantifying these losses is the high degree of variability across operations, including differences in poultry house age, whether a house contained a flock at the time of the storm or had been repurposed, lost value of production and grower income, whether damaged houses can be repaired or must be fully replaced, and disruptions to the delivery of birds, feed, and propane. In collaboration with Arkansas stakeholders, a separate report is forthcoming that will estimate losses to the Arkansas poultry industry and the broader Arkansas economy.

Specialty Crops

Estimated dollar losses were calculated by combining county agent survey responses on anticipated percentage yield losses with baseline values of production for Arkansas specialty crops. For each crop, we used the weighted average yield loss from the survey responses. To convert those percentage losses to dollars, we applied them to 2022 Census of Agriculture specialty crop acreage and value of production for Arkansas. For blueberries, blackberries, and strawberries, the 2022 statewide value of berry production was allocated across crops using their relative shares of reported berry acreage. The value of loss for each crop was then calculated as baseline value of production times the weighted average yield loss. These estimates reflect expected revenue losses from reduced yields.

Results are summarized in Table 1. Estimated yield losses ranged from 4% to 8% across crops, with strawberries experiencing the largest loss (8%). Peaches and grapes and muscadines were both estimated at 4% yield losses. Value of production losses were largest for peaches ($517,800), followed by blackberries ($250,380) and grapes and muscadines ($221,920). Strawberries and blueberries are estimated at $99,040 and $80,400, respectively. For all five crops, the total estimated losses are $1,169,540.

Table 1: Arkansas Value of Production Losses to Specialty Crops

Crop	Yield Loss	Value of Loss
Blueberries (N=30)	5%	$80,400
Blackberries (N=29)	6%	$250,380
Peaches (N=29)	4%	$517,800
Strawberries (N=29)	8%	$99,040
Grapes and Muscadines (N=27)	4%	$221,920

Aquaculture

Survey responses indicate losses to the Arkansas catfish industry of approximately 1.17%. Annual sales of food-size catfish are strongly correlated with the January 1 inventory of food-size catfish reported in the February USDA-NASS Catfish Production report (correlation coefficient greater than 0.90). In 2025, sales of food-size catfish in Arkansas totaled 15.9 million pounds, with a total value of $19.9 million. January 1 inventories of food-size catfish in Arkansas are currently reported to be 20% lower than the previous year. Based on the reported losses and historical sales relationships, we estimate total losses to the Arkansas catfish industry of approximately $270,300.

The survey also indicates losses to the Arkansas baitfish industry of less than 1%. Based on Census of Agriculture data, annual baitfish sales in Arkansas total approximately $29.2 million, implying losses to the baitfish industry of approximately $219,000. Combined losses to the Arkansas aquaculture industry are therefore estimated at approximately $489,300.

Farm Structures and Other Losses

For counties reporting damage to farm structures, respondents indicated that an average of six equipment sheds and two high-tunnel, hoop house, or greenhouse structures were destroyed per county. Losses associated with equipment sheds consist of the value of the structure and any damage to equipment in the collapsed structure. Losses associated with high-tunnel and greenhouse similarly consist of the value of the structure and the value of crop. Crop losses include crops planted or dormant during the storm and crops that cannot be planted because a structure cannot be replaced in time to produce a crop. However, reliable dollar estimates for these losses cannot be developed from the survey because information on the age, size, construction type, and replacement cost of the structures, as well as the value of equipment is not available.

Table 2 summarizes other farm losses from the winter storm. Forages and other farm buildings were the most impacted, followed by timber stands and winter wheat. Several counties reported damage to more than one category.

Table 2: Frequency of Other Farm Losses in Arkansas

Item	Count
Forages	12
Other Farm Buildings	11
Other Equipment	2
Timber Stands	3
Winter Wheat	3