

Winter activities



Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG
www.leafuk/education

Winter activities



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Winter activities



Introduction

There is a tendency to shut ourselves indoors in the winter to wait for the dark days to end and the Spring flowers to emerge. But we are missing so much if we stay indoors in the wintertime!

This is a further e-booklet in the LEAF Education seasonal activities series which celebrates the time of year and suggests a wide variety of activities to encourage children to engage with the outdoors and to learn more about food, farming and the countryside at any time of year.



Winter activities



A year on the farm



A year on the farm

Take a look at some typical farming activities during the seasons



Spring March April May	Summer June July August	Autumn September October November	Winter December January February
<ul style="list-style-type: none">LambingCows are vaccinated and wormed. They are also scanned to see if they are pregnantAny livestock that were housed for the winter are let out into fields to eat grassBeef cows born in autumn are sent to market (spring calves are normally sent to market during the winter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sheep are sheared to keep them cool during the summerThe wool is sent to the marketSome of the lambs are weighed and the heavy ones sent to market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Remaining lambs are weighed and sent to marketA few females are kept for breeding purposesEwes (female sheep) & rams (male sheep) are mated for birth of lambs in springCalving for beef cows (cows mated in early summer will calve in spring)Some cattle and sheep are moved indoors for winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Female sheep are scanned to see if they are pregnant, wormed & vaccinated before lambingAll animals are fed winter feed including silage and hay made earlier in yearCows are mated for autumn calving (on some farms they are mated early in the summer for spring calving)

Livestock
(cattle and sheep)

Download this poster from <http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/classroom-posters> .

What happens to sheep on the farm in winter? (*scanned, wormed and vaccinated before lambing*)

What is the winter feed for many animals? (*silage and hay – what are these?*)

What else must a farmer do in the winter months? (*Buildings maintenance, hedges, fences, ditches*)

There is more detailed information about the farm in winter here: <http://www.hallfarmpark.co.uk/a-farming-year/>

Why not invite a farmer into school to talk about winter on the farm? LEAF Education can help you to get in touch with a local farmer or farmers might be able to talk to the children via Skype or FaceTime.

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What's in season in winter?

Take a look at the “What’s in season?” poster

<http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/classroom-posters>

What do children notice about winter on the poster? (*Fewer foods available – why?*)

Ask the children to list the vegetables available in winter. Better still, visit a local market, greengrocer’s or supermarket and list what vegetables can be purchased. Can the children identify where the foods are grown? Which are grown by British farmers?

Collect a variety of vegetables to introduce to the children. Which can they name? If you have cooking facilities, why not cook some of the vegetables with the children and do some tasting?



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Vegetable Soup

Karen Watson of Barleylands inspired us with this recipe—it is quite simple but the trick is to be as organised as Karen is!

Materials you will need for the group:

Peeled mixed vegetables (e.g. potatoes, onions, carrots etc)

Set of small knives

Chopping boards

Saucepans

Jugs

You will also need access to a hob to heat the soup, a liquidiser or blender and bowls, spoons etc to eat it!

1. Demonstrate the bridge method for safe chopping of vegetables. (See http://media.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/sites/5/2015/09/LGCT018_Safe_Peeling_Chopping.pdf)
2. Distribute a variety of peeled vegetables and supervise chopping
3. Chopped vegetables should be shared between saucepans
4. Add water/stock
5. The cooking on the hob (and subsequent blending) need not involve the children directly. While the soup is cooking, why not move on to making bread rolls?



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Ice sculptures

The only resources you need are water, some natural materials, access to a freezer (or a freezing cold day) and some creative children.

As part of an outdoor session, ask the children to collect natural items such as twigs, cones and berries. Always precede any foraging activity such as this with sensible health and safety messages.

The aim is to collect different natural items to represent what nature has to offer in winter.

Children should arrange their collected items in a bowl (suitable for freezer use) and cover with water. Bowls are then placed in the freezer or they can be left outside to freeze naturally if temperatures are likely to drop to freezing.



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Ice sculptures

Once frozen, the items can be hung outside (adults to make a hole for children to thread with ribbon or string later; or try adding a loop of string or ribbon with one end in the water before freezing). Children can show their sparkly sculptures shining in the winter sunshine.



Thanks to FACE West Midlands Co-ordinator Samantha Summerfield for this activity idea.

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Feed the birds

Feeding the birds is an important activity in the winter months when natural foods are not so easily available.

For this activity you will need a collection of pine cones (how about a winter walk to gather these first?) In addition you need to have available string or wool, wild bird seed and lard or solid vegetable fat—yes, it's going to be messy!

Children select a pine cone and tie on their piece of string or wool to form a loop which will act as a hanger.

Now the messy part: children use their fingers to press the lard or other fat into the cone. Finally, they push the bird seed into the fat. To speed things up you can have the lard and seeds ready mixed together so the children just squish the mixture into the cone.

Warning: watch out for children with wheat allergies!

You need to be close to hand washing facilities—warm water, soap and paper towels.



Activity suggested by Bobbie Harvey, LEAF Education's East Midlands Consultant.

Winter activities



Willow stars

Resources required: willow rods and secateurs.

This is an ideal way to use this year's growth on your willow structures.



Cut a willow rod about 1m long

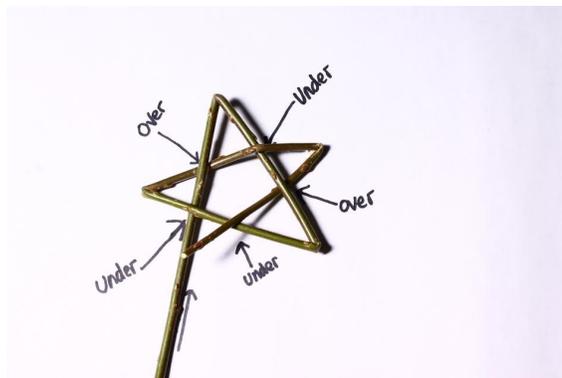
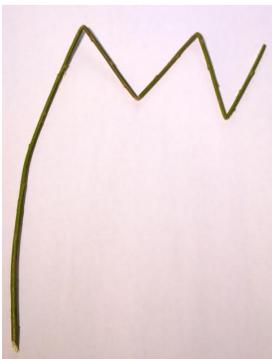
Remove the tip and the leaves

Make 4 bends equal distances apart. Twist the willow as you bend it, this stops it from snapping.

Thread the rod to make the star shape. The bends will be the points.

Make sure your rod passed in front or behind alternately.

Tie the end to the stem to make a wand. Or cut the stem off to make a hanging star.



Activity suggested by Bobbie Harvey, LEAF Education's East Midlands Consultant.

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Winter weather words

Ask the children to write down descriptive words for the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. For younger children provide a selection of words (maybe laminated individually) so that they can sort the cards into the correct season. Some words will be appropriate for several seasons so this allows plenty of scope for discussion!

Here are some words to start the list:

windy	wet	hot	foggy	crisp
sunny	cold	blustery	frosty	icy
snowy	breezy	chilly	soggy	dry
dark	mild	stormy	snowy	humid

Young children can learn more about the seasons in this video:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zcx3gk7>

Find a farmer and ask what effect the weather has on the farm. (LEAF Education can help you find a local farmer.)

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Winter poetry

Build on the winter words work to create some winter poetry

Be inspired by this lovely animation of Thomas Hardy's poem "Winter in Durnover Field."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03vfw53>

Use this PowerPoint presentation to remind pupils of the variations of winter weather:

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/winter-powerpoint-for-iwb-6168238>

Read [Winter on the farm](#) by David Wood

1. Why does the poet say the grass is like glass?
2. Which "weather words" appear in the poem?
3. What do the cattle eat?
4. Where do they shelter?
5. Which words describe the nature of Highland cattle?



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Winter food celebrations

There are many seasonal celebrations and traditions. Which ones take place in the winter?

The last Sunday of the Christian church year, or the Sunday before Advent, is often called Stir up Sunday. On Stir up Sunday it is traditional for everyone to take a turn at stirring the Christmas pudding, whilst making a wish.

Try some of these Stir up Sunday activities:

- Treasure hunt for the 13 ingredients of the cake
- Measuring and weighing
- Sharing recipes
- Making a pudding for the birds

Ask pupils to research celebrations that take place in different communities—many involve food. What foods are eaten and why? Here are some starting points

Hannukah

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/hanukkah-2015-food-traditions-celebrate-jewish-festival-1531881>

Eid

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/eid-al-fitr-2016-popular-foods-sweets-around-world-end-ramadan-fast-1568936>

Invite in members of local communities to talk about the foods they share and how they are grown and produced.

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Winter solstice

One of the oldest winter celebrations in the world is the pagan festival of the winter solstice—sometimes also called Yule. Use the Internet to find out the date of the winter solstice this year.

Can pupils think of any uses of the term Yule today? (*“Yuletide greetings” sometimes appear on Christmas cards; Yule log is a popular Christmas dessert.*)

Ancient people were hunters and gatherers and the weather was of great importance to their daily lives. Some people believed the sun was a wheel that changed the seasons. The Norse word for wheel, *houl*, is thought to be the origin of the word Yule.

Could the pupils use dictionaries and the Internet to find out the origins of other wintertime words? Use the winter words sheet as a stimulus.



Winter activities



More ideas!

The Countryside Classroom website has a number of winter themed resources

[The twelve days of Christmas in the natural environment](#)

[Build a bottle birdfeeder](#)

[Christmas in the countryside](#)

[Mexican Christmas bread](#)

[Santa comes to the woods](#)

[Christmas Rural Crafts](#)

There are many activity sheets and other resources on the Times Educational Supplement resources site.

Which famous artists have depicted winter? How about creating your own winter scenes?

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/winter-art-6138559>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-features/8222650/Top-ten-winter-scenes.html>