

July 28, 2019

Clothing and Bedding Preparedness

Short-term Bedding

For quick grab and go it is hard to beat a good sleeping bag. You can have a bedroll that includes warm blankets (wool is often preferred) instead if that suits you better. In the past I have known of families who chose to store extra blankets and bedding in such rolls so they would be ready for emergencies when they were not being used. That way they could also use blankets to wrap up in for warmth, but whatever you have it should be ready to go in case you have to pick up and leave.

Besides your bag or blankets, here are some things to consider adding to your roll:

1. A tarp to keep your roll wrapped in. If you have an 8x10 tarp it can also serve as a shelter if needed. (If you plan to have it as a shelter you should also have Paracord.)
2. A ground cover or thin pad-This can be as simple as a plastic shower curtain or a piece of plastic sheeting used in construction. At the very least you can use large garbage bags. I like the small pads because a hard floor or the ground can be difficult to sleep on without waking up with aches.
3. If you don't have a bag that can be used in very cold temperatures it is not a bad idea to have an extra fleece blanket to keep inside and an emergency Mylar blanket to put on top of your bag as well to help hold in the warmth. It is also possible to buy a thermal liner for your sleeping bag that is light and takes up little space. *Fleece is warm unless it gets damp.

4. I like the idea of having a twin sheet that is folded and sewn across the bottom and half way up one side so that you can keep your sleeping bag cleaner. It is easier to wash a sheet than a whole sleeping bag.

Long-term Bedding

While it is very possible we could have a natural disaster, it is just as possible that you could have personal difficulties or we could have something more long term. Having adequate bedding is as important as having adequate clothing, and bedding also wears out.

Plan to have not only the bedding you have on your beds currently, but also enough to keep your family warm at night even in the dead of winter without electricity. You can always add and take away blankets for the different seasons if you have enough for the coldest nights. Keep your bedding in good repair. If you have a child with a very worn favorite blanket, while you may allow them to keep it, make sure that you have a back-up.

If you don't know how much bedding you will need, try a camping trip in the winter with blankets (not sleeping bags). See what it takes to keep warm. I would say that a minimum for each bed is three back-up regular blankets and at least an extra set of sheets.

Laundry without a Washer or Drier

If there is no electricity, or if water and fuel are scarce, or if your washing machine dies at a time when you just can't get a new one, you may be washing by hand.

You can use your bathtub or a bucket, and a large laundry plunger to do the laundry rather than washing it piece by piece. Laundry plungers or "wands" can be easily purchased online and are becoming increasingly popular for people living in RV's and tiny houses. After this article I will also have instructions for a \$5.00 emergency laundry kit.

Basically you use a special plunger to force soap and water through the fabrics over and over. Then you drain and rinse.

You may also need to air dry your laundry. Even if you don't ever need to use the supplies, it is wise to have good clothesline rope, clothespins, and a plan as to how you will hang them up. If your air is clean it is nice to be able to air dry. You don't get static electricity in them, the sun helps disinfect and freshen as well. While you will have more wrinkles air drying, you will have less residue from the chemicals in fabric softeners and drier sheets.

What about winter? Years ago, and still in some countries people have had to dry clothes in cold weather. Here are the options I have heard of:

1. Have somewhere in your house where you can hang clothes, and wash in small batches. I have a dear friend in China who can travel lighter than anyone I have ever known. He takes only one change of clothing. Each night he washes out the clothes he wore that day and hangs them to dry. The next day he wears the other set. If you do that every day you don't need as much space or as many clothes.
2. Hang clothes out even in the cold and hope it warms enough to eventually dry them. My friends from Romania told me that they added a few drops of kerosene to their rinse water and it allowed the clothes to have a lower freezing point. They loved the smell of kerosene because it smelled like their sheets and clothes. However, if you do this the smell does not wash out easily if at all.
3. Have enough clothes to last all winter without washing and then have a huge project of washing and putting the clothes away the next spring. This is the way my Swedish ancestors chose to deal with their long, dark, cold winters more than a century ago.

\$5.00 Emergency Laundry Kit

This kit is for those who don't think that there is a huge need to go all out, but want something inexpensive just in case. It would be adequate if you are willing to do laundry for a small family every day.

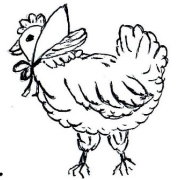
- 1 package of clothes pins *
- 1 length of plastic rope or Parachord *
- One box of laundry soap or big bar of soap *
- 1 inexpensive toilet plunger *
- 1 frosting bucket from Ridley's bakery (\$1.00, but bigger) or use an old 5-gallon bucket

To stay in budget, purchase the first 4 items from a store where everything is \$1.00. Cut or drill a hole in the lid of the bakery bucket big enough to stick the handle of the plunger up through it. Using a drill, make 2" holes about every 2" in the rubber part of the plunger. (If you don't have a drill ask someone to help you.) Now you have a hand washing machine. Keep your clothes pins, rope, and soap in the bucket and you are ready for laundry in a crisis. It is just grab and go. *Baking or washing soda along with bar soap works very well to clean clothes.

Notes from Red Hen

Dear Red,

I see that the farmer's wife here is making several new quilts this summer to prepare for winter. If it is a cold winter we may have a lot of casualties because we never have enough bedding in our unheated coop, and the farmer's son doesn't care for us well. Of course quilts aren't appropriate for a coop of chickens, but there must be something. What do you recommend? — Love, Cousin Speckle



Dear Speckle,

Time to dumpster dive! See if your farmer takes the newspaper. If you can keep a stash of newspaper, wadded or shredded paper creates some good insulation, especially if your bedding is low. It's quite good for adding to your compost when you clean out the coop too. If it comes to the worst, shove all the clean straw or shavings you can into the corner and have everyone huddle there together. Also, do what you can to cover any openings or holes with old tarps or rags.

— Love, Red