



**EVDS** EQUINE VETERINARY &  
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## Home Care and Vet Notes for Flood Rescued Horses

*If you find or have in your care horses rescued from flood waters, these are some notes to help you to being proactive in preventing further losses.*

**Food and Water:** One of the main issues is simply not having enough palatable fibre to eat to stay warm in the cold and wet conditions. Fresh and quality hay sources are ideal in that they are palatable, high in fibre, and can provide enough calories to allow the horse to stay warm. Access to Fresh water is essential. Try to avoid high energy pellets and grains as these can lead to gut problems such as colic. If it is all you have, keep the fed volumes small and every few hours. Good hay is much better.

**Skin cuts and abrasions:** these can be variable in severity and distribution and prone to getting infected. Depending on where they are and how deep, they may need more than just surface cleaning with a hose and application of an antiseptic spray or honey bandage. If the cut is over a joint or tendon, or the horse is quite lame or sore, then they will need more aggressive treatment.

**Pneumonia:** Pneumonia is a common issue in flood rescued horses, as they are often cold, and don't have enough food to keep themselves warm. They may have aspirated water into their lungs and their immune system is very compromised from the conditions. You can monitor their rectal temperatures (should be between 37 and 38.3 degrees Celsius) and watch their breathing pattern. If temperature is high, or they have laboured breathing, then pneumonia is a real possibility, and they will need urgent veterinary treatment.

**Skin infections - Rain scald and greasy heel:** Skin infections are common due to the skin being soaked and losing its protective abilities from invasion of external surface bacteria. So conditions such as rain scald, greasy heel, swollen legs with or without infection all will be common. If the horse is not painful to press on the swollen legs, then it is unlikely to need vet attention with antibiotics, but if the swollen legs are very painful and the horse has a fever, then internal infection is likely.

To treat greasy heel and rain scald, mixing betadine solution with paraffin oil 50:50 and mixing it up immediately prior to applying with a glove, over the affected area, or squirting on with a spray bottle – daily for 5 days for rain scald or 7-14 days for greasy heel - can work really well

**Tetanus:** small leg cuts and scratches will be common, so ensuring that your horse has had a tetanus toxoid in the past 12 months is a good idea.

**Eye swellings and injuries:** these can also vary in severity from minor to severe.

**Seedy toe, foot soreness and foot abscesses:** these will all be common over the next few weeks, secondary to the waterlogged feet and can cause your horse to be lame and sore in 1 or more legs. Speak to your farrier, do your best to get your horse to dry ground, scrape and pick out the seedy toe and squirt either bleach or betadine or 5-10 % copper sulphate in water down into the seedy toe tracts. Ensure that your horse is up to date with tetanus vaccinations.

**Habronema skin lesions** on eyes, legs, penis etc. There will likely be a lot of flies about soon, and with that comes an increase in the number of habronema skin lesions (appear as oozing, non-healing wounds on the skin and sometimes you'll see small sesame seed sized smooth kunkers, or yellow looking kunkers as a result of the parasitic infection.

**Phycomycoses** and fungal like infections – these can be devastating as they arise from plants in wet areas and inadvertently invade skin wounds and can be very aggressive and invasive. They just look like a simple wound at first but ooze a honey like liquid and can be itchy, causing the horse to chew at them.

**Melioidosis** – where a soil borne bacteria causes lung infection, fever, headaches, weight loss etc. – can infect people and animals.

**Colic** from impactions from feeding mouldy hay, spoilt feeds etc.

**Ross River Fever, West Nile Virus and other arboviruses** – spread by mosquitoes and other biting insects – can infect horses and cause fever, lethargy, stiffness, wobbliness, unable to get up etc.

**For flood affected livestock and horses in the Northern Rivers of NSW, Australia:**

- 1) Call the Ag and Animal Hotline on 1800 814 647 organised by the NSW Government.
- 2) And join the facebook group Flood Displaced Livestock – Northern Rivers to monitor & place details of your lost animals on it.

Please be patient and respectful should you need assistance from your veterinarian, as they are likely to be very busy and stretched right now.