

# Horse Care After Floods

If your horses have been affected by flooding, it is important to assess them as soon as it is safe to do so. You should identify any injuries or illnesses and contact your veterinarian if required. Ensure your horses have access to food, clean drinking water and shelter. It is important that owners monitor their horses closely and contact their veterinarian if they detect any signs of illness or injuries.

Some illnesses might not become apparent until several days after the horses have been removed from the flood waters. Monitoring your horses for changes in their respiration rate and mucous membrane (gum) colour, can often help to indicate when veterinary attention is needed. These horses are also at risk of colic, so monitoring their feed intake and ensuring there is an adequate amount of faeces being passed, will assist in identifying early signs of gastrointestinal dysfunction.

During flood times, persistent wetting of their hooves can lead to softening of the hooves, which then makes them more susceptible to bruising and penetrating injuries. This can also lead to bacterial infections in the hoof itself, lower limbs and potential cellulitis. Any penetrating wounds must be seen by a veterinarian to assess whether antibiotics are appropriate to prevent infection.

Horses that have been standing in flood water for some time will be more susceptible to skin infections. Any wounds are a perfect entry point for any pathogens from the flood waters to gain entry. Lacerations and abrasions may not be immediately obvious. Both bacterial and fungal infections are common, and these horses could be at risk of sepsis if they do not receive treatment. Horses will need to be checked closely for any indications of cellulitis, tendonitis or fractures.

For more information visit

[www.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au)



Local Land  
Services

These horses are also at risk of tying-up. Tetanus vaccine boosters should be administered to these horses.

If horses have been in deep flood water and struggled to keep their head above water, or have had to be moved through moving flood water, they are at risk of aspiration pneumonia and infectious respiratory diseases. These horses must be monitored closely and assessed by a veterinarian. Early identification and onset of treatment, gives the horses the best possible chance of recovery and survival. Many of these horses may require hospitalisation for potential life saving treatment.

Horses eyes must also be checked for any potential ulcers or injuries. These horses require veterinary attention so that appropriate medications can be dispensed.

It is important to provide good quality dry feed for these horses. Mouldy feed contains toxins that can be fatal to horses. Similarly, if there is no dry pasture available, horses may be forced to eat toxic weeds in the paddock. If feeding out hay that has been stored in sheds, it is paramount that it is opened and checked prior to being fed out.

Checking these horses daily and keeping an eye out for any changes in demeanour or behaviour, and early identification of any illness or injuries is essential.

For support and advice call your **Local Land Services District Veterinarian on 1300 795 299.**

