

National

Were Your Horses Prepared for Hurricane Irene?



Diana De Rosa, Horse Show Examiner

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There are lots of things you need to have prepared for when a hurricane is possible, including a good first aid kit.

Credits: Ian Culley graphic



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I asked the advice of a few different people about what we can do to help keep our horses safe especially from the affects of a hurricane.

Equine Nutritionist **Gabriele Sutton** of **KAM Animal Services** (www.kamanimalservices.com) also emphasized, "It's important to keep your horses hydrated when undergoing extreme stress. Many horses stop drinking in severe weather, nearby fire and extreme heat. When evacuating your horses, add additional electrolytes to the water or force feed electrolytes to ensure that your horse's electrolyte needs stay balanced. Monitor your horse's water intake very closely and take action the minute you notice a reduction in intake."

Gabriele added that, "Since horses are flight animals, the emotion of fear is always close by! Protect your horse's gut from stress caused by extreme weather change and evacuation. Protecting your horse's digestive tract from ulcers and colic is key. Feed a pre-biotic several times daily along with Gastrogard if needed, especially for those horses that do not travel well and don't like change."

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Marian Nilsen of **Healthy Horse Boutique** and **Cookies with a Clue** (www.healthyhorseboutique.com) noted, "A hurricane will be stressful on horses. Stress can lead to ulcers and not drinking so colic becomes a concern."

Nilsen has a few products she uses for her horses and suggests you also have these handy. To protect the GI she suggests three KAM Animal Services products including KLPP, Enzymes Plus and UF. To keep them calm her vote is Stress Busters cookies. As for making sure they don't get dehydrated Marian commented, "If you notice your horses are not drinking add something yummy to their water (like Gatorade). Also, don't forget to boost their immune system."

Dr. Stephen Soule has been the Official Veterinarian for the **Washington International Horse Show** since 1976. Dr. Soule, who works with hunters, jumpers and equitation horses, has spent 35 of his 38 years of practice working with the Washington International. When it comes to hurricanes Soule suggests that having adequate supplies of feed and water are critical. "Water can become especially critical if the electricity goes out," he noted.

Other suggestions by Dr. Soule included closing barn doors and windows and getting horses out of flood zones and away from the eye of the storm. He also suggests monitoring horses

since some can get upset by rattling noises and high winds, so think about ways to keep them calm.

It is in stressful situations like this that Nilsen likes giving her horses a handful of her Stress Buster cookies, which are often given to horses just before they are faced with a situation which might stress them, such as this.

"A good first aid kit is also important," explained Dr. Soule, who referred to it as a hurricane kit and reminded us to include a flash light.

Since Dr. Soule lives in West Palm Beach, FL, he is well versed to offer advice about preparing for hurricanes, since he's lived through many himself. In fact, he went through Hurricane Ivan four times since he ended up traveling while Ivan was moving up the coast and then came back again to Florida.

Fortunately, most of our horses got through Hurricane Irene safely but this continues to be hurricane season. In addition to preparing your horses, be sure to also be prepared yourself to survive any damage you may have to endure from the next hurricane that passes through your state. Both Nilsen and Sutton have indicated they will happily answer your questions about hurricane preparedness. Just go to their web sites where you will find information on how to email or call them.

Keeping our horses safe is important to all of us. So, take the advice that Sutton, Dr. Soule and Nilsen offer seriously. It may save a life!

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By Diana De Rosa
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Diana DeRosa is a veteran equestrian journalist, who has traveled the world and recorded history for close to 30 years. An former rider, De Rosa...

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