

From: Riding Safely Editor [mailto:editor@ridingsafely.net]

Sent: 25 October 2007 22:30

To: '2007floodreview@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk'

Subject: Flooding Lessons Learned Review - COMMENT - please consider horse keepers

A lesson learned during the recent floods is that there is no targeted guidance to assist a group particularly at risk - equine employers, staff, horse keepers and their horses.

Dear Flooding Lessons Learned Review Team,

I understand, put simply, that the purpose of your review is to examine both how to reduce the risk and impact of floods and the emergency response to the floods.

I should point out from the outset that I did not suffer from the effects of the recent flooding.

I am the Editor of an online equestrian safety newsletter - Riding Safely - the aim of which is to promote and improve the health, safety and welfare of horse and rider and ultimately keep equestrian businesses in business.

For the purposes of the Riding Safely newsletter, I reported on how the floods had affected horse keepers.

On the first objective of your review -- to reduce the risk of floods -- I unfortunately have little comment, although clearly if it is possible to reduce the risk or eliminate the potential for flooding then the demands of dealing with the aftermath become substantially reduced. I am sure that this aspect will be key to your review. The only report that I received relating to measures that might locally reduce the risk of floods was from the *Farmers Guardian* (20 July) that claimed "Lack of maintenance on water courses in Nottinghamshire have caused serious and repeated flooding for farms and other rural businesses."

(Full report at <http://www.farmersguardian.com/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=11475>)

In dealing with any flooding emergency, the health, safety and welfare of people must come first. It is also a legal requirement incumbent upon an employer with employees in a flood situation. In addition, the keepers of animals have "duty of care" legal responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 for any animals if their premises become flooded.

Taking the second objective - reducing the impact of floods - I would suggest that this may be achieved through the communication of areas of risk, and information for people in those areas on what to do before, during and after a flood.

There is considerable information from the Environment Agency on these aspects on the Internet. However it is not clear how this information will be provided to those who do not have access to or feel uncomfortable using a computer.

I would suggest that a more proactive approach is taken in informing those that live in risk areas of the action they may need to take.

The thrust of this note is that the health, safety and welfare of horse keepers and their horses needs to be addressed.

As already identified, there are legal requirements on equine employers and horse keepers in a flooding emergency. However, there is no published guidance specifically to help this group. The risks that equine employers, their staff and other horse keepers are exposed to during flooding emergencies, particularly with horse evacuations may be considered as high. It is commonly accepted that in emergency situations about 80% of animal owners put the health safety and welfare of their animals above their own.

Having identified this gap of a lack of specifically targeted guidance, I provided some outline guidance through a special feature in the Riding Safely July & August newsletter. This has been shared with the Rural Stakeholder Relations and Sponsorship Team - Rural Policy Division (RPD) – Defra, who I believe are looking at this outline guidance with a view to developing in partnership with the horse industry, guidance on flooding for horse keepers.

A copy of the Riding Safely feature is attached and below is a copy of the e-mail sent to the RPD.

I should like to propose that the RPD are provided with sufficient resource to undertake and complete this guidance.

As I was not directly affected by flooding I have no comment to make on the third objective regarding the emergency response during the recent floods.

I trust you find these comments helpful. May I ask you to please confirm receipt of this email.

Regards,

Ken Law

Editor

Riding Safely

www.ridingsafely.net