

EQUINE WELLNESS

# EquineWELLNESS

Your natural resource!

## GOING BITLESS

Tips for a successful transition

## Something FISHY

The benefits of fish oil

## SCENTS FOR STRESS

How to deal with common problems related to stress

## 5 SELF-DEFENSE TIPS

for the trail

## CRASH COURSE

What you need to know to prevent accidents

## Starting off on the RIGHT FOOT

Advice on trimming your foal

## Hospice for horses

## Feeling stalled?

Four ways to make stall rest easier

## "BIT" CONFUSED?

Taking the mystery out of bits

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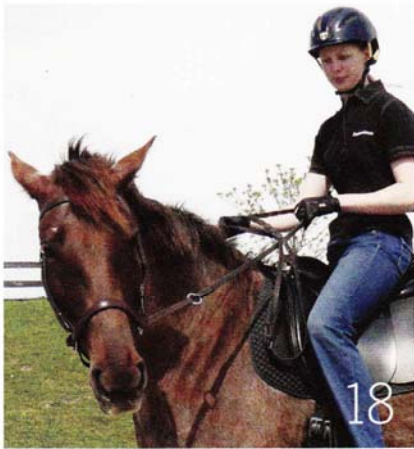
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# DISASTER

Natural disaster preparedness isn't just for humans. Include your horses in your plans for safety so they don't suffer or go missing.

BY ANGELA KIRBY

Check fence lines and other structures for damage after the storm passes to be sure horses cannot escape or be injured by debris.

When Hurricane Andrew hit Florida in 1992, the majority of horses had no identification. What's worse is that unsuspecting owners temporarily handed their animals over to someone claiming to be a rescue. These horses were never seen again. Conan, meanwhile, was one of many missing horses reported after Hurricane Katrina. He was also one of many that drowned because owners had no way to evacuate them and never expected such a horrific flood.

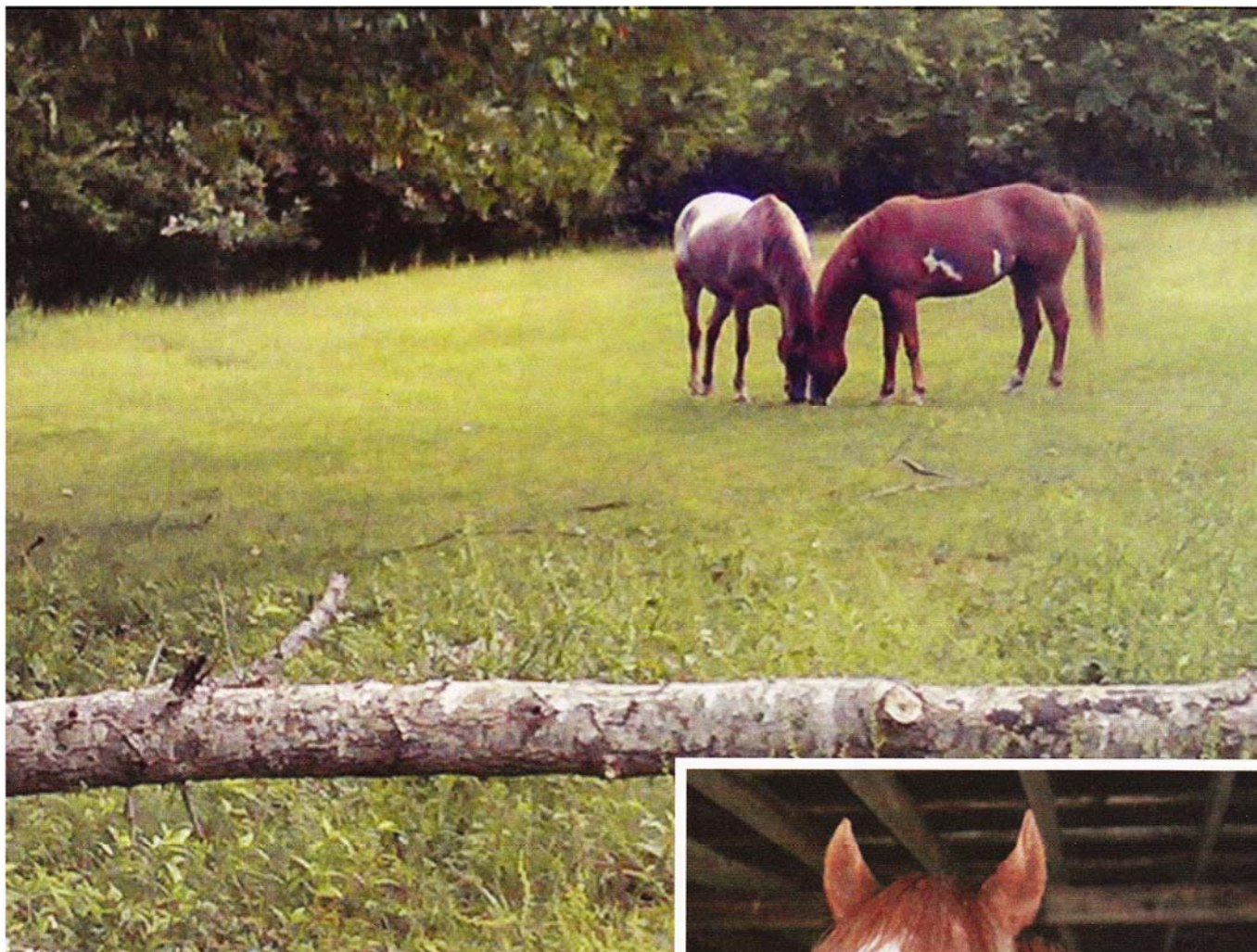
As the volunteer executive coordinator for Stolen Horse International (aka NetPosse), a nonprofit that assists in the prevention and recovery of stolen and missing horses, I'm often asked to write articles to increase public awareness. And it never fails – as soon as I begin an article, real life steps in to offer some perfect examples for the story.

On the afternoon of May 3, 2009, a tornado skipped across our property, downing trees and fence lines. We spent the

next two days clearing fences to ensure the horses did not escape. Not four days later, many low-lying areas in nearby Montgomery County, Alabama were unexpectedly flooded in a matter of hours. Shortly afterwards, I received an email from an acquaintance who was missing four donkeys when the waters capped their five-foot pen.

One of my tasks is processing the reports NetPosse receives. I immediately created a flyer and a webpage for the missing donkeys before sending out an alert to thousands of volunteers and list groups. In the meantime, I wondered about the donkeys' fate. Did they swim away when the waters rose, or were they swept away? Will they be found unharmed or injured? Just as importantly – could the owner have prevented this situation?

This particular disaster was hard to prepare for because it struck without warning. The flood came swiftly, suddenly and relentlessly, demolishing structures and sweeping



away everything in its path. Don't think it can't happen to you. Every horse owner needs to know how to keep their animals safe in the event of a natural disaster.

### PLANNING FOR THE WORST

Google the term "natural disaster preparedness", and many links will pop up, but they're mostly for humans. If you need to flee your home because of flood, fire or hurricane, you can throw a suitcase in your car at a moment's notice. In the event of a possible tornado, you can seek shelter in the nearest building or innermost room of a house. But what about your four-legged friends – specifically equines that can't take shelter in your home or fit in the backseat of your car?

Animal lovers got a wake-up call during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Many attempted to take their companions but were not allowed to, while others refused



Eb's Stormin Around was rescued from the roof of a barn following Hurricane Katrina and taken to safety before disappearing again.

to leave without them and consequently perished. Still others didn't realize the gravity of the situation and expected to merely ride out the storm in a nearby town for a couple of days. So they left their animals behind with food, water and shelter. Had the levee not broken,



Horses are often misplaced or taken illegally after storms. Blaze, a Miniature from Mississippi, was one of these. Once he was found, his owners couldn't keep him, so NetPosse adopted him to a new family.

they would have returned to the coast and found their homes and animals safe.

Unfortunately, that's not what happened, and NetPosse along with several other organizations, began listing missing animals. Because of these combined efforts, hundreds of animals were reunited with their families. But not all were. As a result of this tragedy, a nationwide movement began in an effort to change the laws to allow people to take their animals with them during an evacuation. Again though, unlike a dog or cat, you can't pack your horse in a carrier or bed him down in a hotel room.

The key to surviving any natural disaster is to have a plan of action in place. You also need to have certain items on hand in the event of injury or the need to rescue an equine trapped by debris. Here are a few tips on disaster planning for horse owners.

## WEATHERING THE STORM

- If your horses need to be moved to safety, be sure to

have transportation available if you do not own a trailer or cannot move all your horses in one trip.

- Plan an evacuation route and a location where the horses can be housed temporarily. Many horse owners offer shelter during these times, and your local fairground or coliseum will usually open their facilities to the public.

- Keep documentation such as Coggins, registration papers, vet records and pictures available in case they are needed for proof of ownership, medical treatment or to find a missing horse.

- Have emergency medical supplies on hand in the event of injury. Include bandages, scissors, alcohol, eye ointment, and gauze or vet wrap.

- Keep handy basic tools such as wire cutters, a limb saw, chains and ropes in case an animal is trapped by debris.

- You'll be hauling animals that will require water, food and rest, so leave before a mandatory evacuation is announced.

- Identify your horse through a freeze brand, hoof brand, microchip or temporary leg bands. In a pinch, write your name and phone number on your horse with a permanent marker.

- Know the names and contact information of local animal shelters and agencies, and the county sheriff's department, so you can notify them immediately if you need help or have a missing animal.

- **Important:** do not trust those who come out of the blue and offer to give your animal temporary shelter unless you know that person or the organization they claim to represent.

- Store two weeks' supply of hay in waterproof bags. Also store some barrels of water in case your fresh water supply is interrupted.



Permanent ID – freeze brand




Temporary ID – hoof brand

Permanent ID such as microchips and freeze brands are recommended as proof of ownership should your horse go missing.

- Know your property and barn well enough to decide where your horse would be safest in the event of flying debris or structural damage.
- Will your fencing contain your animals? Some horses will run through electric fencing or barbed wire if frightened.

## AFTERWARDS

- Check horses for signs of injury, and continue to watch them until their comfort level is back to normal. Horses are often very stressed and spooky after severe storms.
- Check all fence lines for damage; many horses go missing after the storm is over.
- Check your barn for damage such as protruding boards or nails, a collapsing structure or anything else that could cause injury to a horse.
- Be aware of the aftermath. Floodwaters often come with tornados or hurricanes and can do more damage than the actual storms.

Horses have excellent instincts. Many of the lost horses reported to NetPosse are recovered in about ten days when they return to the place of disappearance, even if they're unfamiliar with the area. Things become problematic when the horse is injured or trapped, or has no clean water or food. As responsible horse owners, it's therefore our duty to include our equines in our disaster plans. 

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Learn more at [netposse.com/Disaster/disasterplanning.htm](http://netposse.com/Disaster/disasterplanning.htm).