Injuries and outcome of three horses hospitalized in the aftermath of Hurricane Isaac

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The Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine combines community service with experiential learning by taking advantage of a physical presence amidst a disaster-prone region of the U.S. to incorporate veterinary students, faculty veterinarians, and staff as first responders. Through a continued solid partnership with the Louisiana State Animal Response Team (LSART) and others we have advanced expertise with disaster response while building a nationally recognized program that includes animal emergency planning, evacuation, sheltering, medical triage, and technical rescue expertise. Beginning in 2001 with Tropical Storm Allison, through Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ike, Isaac, the Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill, and numerous flood scenarios, experiential learning opportunities have provided rigorous training opportunities for us. Most recently, Hurricane Isaac provided unusual challenges involving chemical and biological haz-mat situations with horses. This Category 1 hurricane, made landfall on coastal Louisiana on 8/28/2012. The storm’s size, path, and slow pace created a 14 feet storm surge, resulting in devastating flooding in southern Louisiana. Flood waters were contaminated with sewage and industrial chemicals. Three horses were rescued from slack water situations and transported for emergency treatment for injuries sustained in the hurricane’s aftermath. Horses were triaged in the field by LSU-SVM/LSART responders and hospitalized at the LSU Veterinary Hospital. Horse 1 presented with a degloving injury and developed neurologic signs and was humanely euthanized four days after presentation; necropsy was consistent with Salmonella septicemia and disseminated mycosis due to Candida krusei, the first case ever reported in a horse. Horse 2 presented with severe dermatitis/cellulitis from chemical exposure and pneumonia and was euthanized due to severe laminitis. Horse 3 sustained a degloving injury and was euthanized due to intractable pain after 10 days. This case series illustrates the need for preparation and early evacuation to avoid grave, life-ending injuries in livestock caused by hurricanes. [In press, Equine Veterinary Education, accepted Dec. 2014]