Medical Care of Sheltered Equines During Three Large-Scale Northern California Wildland Fires

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It is estimated that 20% of horses sheltered in wildland fires will require some form of veterinary care. The most common issues encountered are wounds and lacerations, gastrointestinal disturbances, lameness, and ocular problems. Responding veterinarians should plan to have a cache of wound care materials and medications to manage expected caseloads. Authors’ addresses: Napa Valley Equine, 3198 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA 94558 (Sonder); University of California, Davis One Health Institute, School of Veterinary Medicine, Davis, CA 95616 (Costa); 6073 South Oak Canyon Drive, Holladay, UT 84121 (Damon); Northrup Consulting, 3650 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 215, Lafayette, CA 94549 (Northrup); Panorama Equine Medical & Surgical Center, 10302 Old Oregon Trail, Redding, CA 96003 (Liberman); Briarwood Equine Clinic Inc., 4370 Alpine Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028 (Hanes); e-mail: csonder@norcalaep.org.

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1. Introduction

The last 5 years in California have suffered the largest wildfires on record for the state, with limited data available regarding equine shelter caseloads. The American Veterinary Medical Association is working to establish core competencies for veterinary disaster certification. This study describes veterinary components of equine wildfire shelter response and compares medical record data across three separate incidents.

2. Materials and Methods

Medical records were collected from the Northern California Association of Equine Practitioners disaster trailer following three wildfire shelter deployments. The total number of equines evacuated and the medical records of horses requiring examinations were tracked, coded, and analyzed.

3. Results

The percentage of sheltered horses receiving medical care was 20%. Wounds and lacerations comprised 34% of cases, gastrointestinal disturbances 26%, lameness 16%, eye 10%, other 9%, and parasites 5% of cases examined. NSAIDS were the most prescribed medications.

4. Discussion

Veterinary response teams should estimate treating 20% of wildfire sheltered equines. Although
percentages of case types vary between incidents, advance planning for the treatment of wounds and lacerations, gastrointestinal disturbances, lameness, and eye issues is necessary. Burn care of sheltered equines was minimal in this study. Understanding veterinary caseloads relative to disaster types will help to inform future training and disaster certification.

Acknowledgments

Declaration of Ethics
The Authors have adhered to the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the AVMA.

Conflict of Interest
The Authors have no conflicts of interest.