

EQUINE

emergencyrescue

A horse owner's guide to Large Animal Rescue



MaryAnne Leighton & Michelle Staples

“This book could save your horse’s life!”

Every horse, no matter how quiet or well educated, has the potential to become involved in an emergency incident and need to be rescued. If your horse has gone down in his float, is trapped in mud, fire or floodwater, or has fallen into a ditch, sinkhole, septic tank or swimming pool, you need the information contained in this book.

Equine Emergency Rescue is the first book to address the subject of technical large animal emergency rescue in a way that makes sense to horse owners and that is specifically designed to help emergency responders rescue your horse safely, even if they are not trained in these techniques. Rescuing trapped horses is incredibly dangerous because horses are immensely strong and unpredictable and can kick with accuracy and killing force within a third of a second. This is why you and emergency responders must always treat a trapped horse as if it were a Hazardous Material – a dangerous object that will explode without warning.

Equine Emergency Rescue is a must-have guide for horse owners, emergency responders and equine and large animal vets. The information it contains could help save your horse’s life.

*‘Every horse owner needs the information in this book for their own safety and that of their horse. When you have to call fire/rescue/police you need to know how to help them – this book **shows** you how.’*

Dr Rebecca Gimenez, Primary Instructor/President,
Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue, USA

‘... this book is a valuable resource for anyone involved in a Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue. It is also a great guide for establishing a safe scene before the arrival of the emergency services. Keep one in your truck or towing vehicle at all times.’

Anthony Hatch, NSW Fire and Rescue and SES



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7 Extrication from a Horse Float



Roger Lauzé

This chapter contains step-by-step instructions for trained emergency responders on how to remove a horse that has gone down in a float or from a float that has overturned, how to right an overturned float, information on the configuration and construction of horse floats and the disadvantages of using power tools to extricate a horse from a float.

Horse floats are usually strongly built and it is rare for a horse to be severely injured, even in a rollover. Very few rescues involving horses trapped in floats need to be carried out immediately, in spite of pressure from the horse's owner, police, media or bystanders. As long as the horse remains inside, his chances of survival are good. However, each rescue is different and rescuers must take many factors into account before choosing a safe means of rescue.

A horse trapped in the confined space of a float poses extreme risks to anyone who attempts to get inside with him. The vet should consider restraint and stopping techniques that can be applied from a distance, or use full anaesthesia if there is a requirement to work inside the float with the horse. The simplest, safest, least intrusive course of action should be used to extricate the horse and if the horse is able to help himself, he should be assisted to do so. It is preferable and much safer to lead, drag, lift or roll a horse from a float than to cut him out with power tools.

STEP 1

Scene safety

As with any incident, scene safety and rescuer safety are your first concern. Check for fallen power lines, leaking fuel or other hazards and check the overall stability of the float and towing vehicle. Stabilise the float before you attempt anything else; 500 kilos of panicked horse will rock, tip or move it. You may need to unhitch the float from the towing vehicle. Do not enter the float to reassure or touch the horse. Do not lower the tailgate or open the side door or the horse will try to escape or begin to struggle violently. Cover windows and the gap at the top of the tailgate with a tarp or sheets of ply to prevent the horse from trying to escape through them. When you look into the float to check the condition of the horse, look through windows or use the smallest possible opening for the shortest possible time. If it is a warm day, keep the horse cool with fans or water.

Sometimes you can be lucky and a rescue is simple. This traffic accident on England's M3 motorway involved a horse float containing one horse, Bertie. Once they had ascertained that Bertie was not injured and that he had regained his feet on his own, was calm and did not need to be sedated, emergency responders from Blue Watch at Rushmoor, Basingstoke's Special Equipment Unit and Odiham Fire and Rescue stabilised the float, then lowered it so Bertie could walk free. He immediately loaded onto another float.

Photos: Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

