



Official Verderer
Lord Manners

Verderers of the New Forest

The Queen's House
Lyndhurst
Hampshire
SO43 7NH

Telephone: 023 8028 2052
E-mail: enquiries@verderers.org.uk

THE FOREST AND THE DROUGHT – JULY 2018

WATER

We understand that residents are becoming worried about a possible lack of water for the Forest animals in this unusually prolonged period without rain.

We would like to assure everyone that the animals DO know where to find water. It is actually rarely far away, even if some of the usual watering holes have dried up.

Putting out water in buckets and other receptacles for the animals is very counterproductive and dangerous and we ask Forest residents not to do it.

A story was related to our office last week which shows exactly why putting out water is not a good idea....

A commoner who has small herd of cows and some ponies told us that she found that because a neighbour is putting out a small container of water, some of her herd are going without. If her one or two lead animals don't feel they need a drink, the herd does not go to the nearby Moyles Court Stream which is still flowing freely.

We have also found in previous years, that animals have either tipped buckets over or they have injured one another as they argue over access to them.

There are a number of large water troughs in the Forest, supplied by mains water as well as the streams and ponds which would require a drought lasting half the year before they dried out.

It is far better to allow the animals to find natural supplies of water.

FOOD

We are also receiving phone calls and emails from members of the public concerned that the Forest animals do not have enough to eat whilst the dry weather continues.

The Agisters monitor the condition of stock and in our July Verderers' Court, our Head Agister reported the animals are looking very good.

Having said that, we have noticed that some mares with foals, or yearlings still demanding milk, are beginning to go back in condition. These animals are being watched carefully and any that do start to look too thin will be taken back to their owners' holdings for supplementary feeding.

In any event, it is impractical to provide supplementary feed on the Forest. Huge numbers of animals would choose an easy meal rather than foraging naturally and the strongest would get the most. Also of course, there is the sheer logistics of trying to feed several thousand animals without creating additional problems.

There is still food in the valley bottoms, on the edges of the mires and along the banks of Forest streams. When left to their own devices, without human intervention, the animals will move to areas where they can find food and water.

We want people to be assured that we are keeping an eye on the stock and we will take action where it is needed in order to prevent unnecessary suffering.

FISH & WILDLIFE

The Verderers' Office has received several calls about fish because the water level in some of the Forest ponds is dropping and people are understandably concerned.

However, fish do not come under the Verderers' remit and we cannot help! Fish are the preserve of the Forestry Commission where they are in streams, rivers and ponds on the Crown Lands. Concerns and enquiries regarding fish should therefore be made with the Forestry Commission on 0300 067 4600. E Mail to: enquiries.southern@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

We hope this is helpful but if anyone still feels they would like to talk to us, please ring the Clerk or her assistant on 023 8028 2052 or email enquiries@verderers.org.uk

Thank you

Sue Westwood
Clerk to the Verderers

26th July 2018