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WHY IS IT NOT A GOOD IDEA TO PUT OUT WATER FOR THE FOREST ANIMALS?

We understand that in periods of hot, dry weather, members of the public may become concerned that the Forest animals do not have enough water to drink.

All the animals have a 'haunt' which is the Forest name for the area in which they live. That haunt will include all the animals need to live on the Forest – food, water and shade/protection from the weather. So concerns over lack of water are generally unfounded.

Many years ago, in places where it was considered there genuinely was a lack of natural water, or there was a reason for encouraging the animals to stay away from the water – such as Balmer Lawn where large numbers of people congregate around the banks of the Lymington River - water troughs were installed and they remain in situ today.

Putting out buckets of water is not helpful. It discourages animals from going to look for natural water supplies. It may encourage them to remain in a smaller area than they would normally and as a result they may actually start to lose condition if food becomes limited. Fights may break out over buckets, especially if some ponies in a group know that buckets sometimes contain food. Kicks, bites and other injuries may result and any person getting in the way is at risk of being injured as well. There have also been incidents where vehicles parked nearby have been damaged as a result of ponies scrapping over water.

Putting out water buckets by the roadside is definitely a bad idea. It encourages stock to the roadside where they will be at risk of a collision with passing traffic.

The animals are perfectly able to find natural water supplies for themselves. For all the reasons mentioned, we would be grateful if local residents would not put out buckets of water.

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