

Norfolk-based horse sanctuary Redwings has sent veterinary expertise and support to the Police and animal sanctuaries in Northern Ireland following a shocking discovery of equine neglect.

More than 60 horses and ponies have been rescued from a farm in County Antrim after being found in squalid conditions by a vet last Tuesday, 22nd November. Police were called and found them living amongst the carcasses of nine dead horses - the scene being reminiscent of the horror of 2008 when Redwings and other animal charities rescued over 100 horses, donkeys and ponies from a farm in Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

Nic de Brauwere, Head of Welfare at Redwings and Chairman of the National Equine Welfare Council, was there to assist with the rescue operation. He said, "The conditions I witnessed in Antrim were as bad as anything I have seen in 20 years working in horse welfare. It was imperative that action was taken to protect the horses, ponies and donkeys from further suffering."

Four animals were found to be in such poor condition that they had to be humanely put down. Once examined, the animals were then removed from the site and placed with a number of local animal sanctuaries.

Nic de Brauwere added: "Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary and the Donkey Sanctuary have now provided this safe haven and we are extremely grateful to them. In this tough time of limited resources it is really quite humbling to see this kind of dedication to animal welfare."

Redwings Welfare Vet Nicola Berryman is now in County Antrim to offer immediate needed support to the local charities - whose resources are being stretched by the sheer scale of the operation. It is likely that, once they have begun to recover, Redwings will also assist by giving sanctuary and necessary care to a number of the rescued ponies.

Investigating officer in Northern Ireland - Sgt Alison Liddle - said, "We are so grateful for the support and assistance we have received over recent days. These organisations serve a very important purpose in helping police deal appropriately with animal cruelty and in taking care of animals that have been abused in such a terrible way."

Redwings is the largest horse sanctuary in the UK and currently provides sanctuary to 1200 horses, ponies and donkeys, with a further 500 in Guardian ownership. See www.redwings.co.uk for further details.