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PATERSON'S CURSE CLAIMS SETTLED

Law firm Slater & Gordon has settled the claims of four people whose horses died after being exposed to noxious weeds after the 2003 Canberra bush fires.

Documents to resolve the cases have been filed in the ACT Magistrates Court.

Hundreds of animals died during the fires while more than 80 horses died after the fires, after being agisted on a number of properties where the weed Paterson's Curse (or Salvation Jane) was allowed to grow.

Slater & Gordon clients will receive a total of more than \$50,000 for their horses and the legal costs they have incurred in pursuing their claims.

The settlement ends legal action against Lions Youth Haven and Stromlo Equestrian Centre.

Lawyer Emma Hines from Slater & Gordon Canberra says if warnings had been heeded and precautions taken the horses need not have died.

"Instead, these horses died a traumatic death many months after the fires because Paterson's Curse was allowed to grow, and, despite warnings, was not treated by spraying.

"While the deaths of these much-loved animals cannot compare to the tragedy of the five people who died in the 2003 bushfires, the deaths of these animals still caused considerable pain and anguish to the families affected."