

Feeding horses in the coldest place this side of Antarctica by Bronwyn Kemp

It's cold. Freezing, in fact. About 6.30 on a Monday morning and all anyone wants to do is go back to bed, hide under the doona and forget the existence of other human beings. All the jumpers you possess are piled upon your person and frankly, your feet are still turning a fine shade of federal blue. The last thing you want to do is leave the semi-warmth resident inside, for the ominous par-frozen wasteland on the other side of the all-too flimsy wooden door.

But alas, the plunge must be taken. Slowly, dreading, I begin to turn the doorhandle then quickly push the door open and slam it behind me in a vague and futile attempt to prevent the aching chill from entering the sleeping house. Now, may as well get it over and done with. I bow my head against the non-existent wind in another fruitless attempt to prevent the frostbite from claiming, not just my nose, but also the rest of my face as well as I trudge towards the foggy blur, which is, I presume, the shed and try not to trip over anything particularly sharp.

Still shivering, I take my hand from the semi-warm depths of my pocket in favour of the biting, frozen steel, twisting the handle and opening the door. Inside is my reprieve, poorly insulated as it is, it's better than nothing. Feed in buckets, the worst part is yet to come, as I leave the fading comfort of the shed and take the dry horse feed to the tap. I plunge my poor hand into the now-wet mixture and stir it. As I turn the tap once again, liquid nitrogen pours over my already tormented skin. The muscles in my hand refuse to co-operate, I think they have gone on strike in protest.

I haul the buckets to the paddock and face the wrath of waiting horses as I open the gate. I drop one bucket and leave Mr Thunder with that and take the other further still for Little Miss Princess who, incidentally, I trust about as far as I could throw...After all that effort, if she bites me she can beeping well go hungry!