

STRANGLES

Strangles is a contagious upper respiratory infection caused by the bacteria- *Streptococcus equi equi*.

Typically, the disease causes swelling of the lymph nodes of the pharynx, larynx and trachea and can cause airway obstruction (hence the name strangles).

The disease can be contracted by direct contact via the nasal or oral route; by close aerosol or fomites (clothes, grooming kits etc).

Typical clinical signs

Usually (but not always) seen in young horses 1-5 years old

- Depression
- Inappetence
- High temperature
- Cough
- Painful swallowing with head outstretched
- Nasal discharge rapidly becoming purulent ('pus like') – the most common sign
- Hot, painful lymph node enlargement and abscessation
- Not all horses will show any or all of these signs!



Diagnosis

Nasopharyngeal swab, Guttural pouch lavage, blood test

Treatment

- Non Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS) Bute - to improve demeanour and stimulate appetite.
- Hot packing abscess- If abscess has not burst of its own accord, encourage rupture by hot packing, which may take several weeks.
- Flush abscess- flush daily with dilute antiseptic.
- TLC- palatable feed, warm stable, comfortable bedding.



Hygiene

- Isolate affected horse, ideally in their own air space- cordon off 2m radius
- Dedicate husbandry equipment solely for infected horse and disinfect thoroughly (including shoes)
- Avoid contact with other horses when dealing with infected horse and wear protective clothing that can be washed and disinfected
- Burn bedding
- Shedding can persist for 2-3 weeks after infection
- Minimise coming and goings onto yard

Hygiene away from the yard

- Use your own buckets, water and feed
- Do not allow other horses to share buckets
- Avoid nose to nose contact with other horses
- Wash your hands between horses when handling other horses
- Disinfect your boots and outer clothing after each show



Management of other horses on yard

- Rectal temperature taken twice daily- as soon as pyrexia (>38.5) isolate
- Hygiene - isolate 'affected' and 'in contact' animals as described above until diagnosed free of disease

To be declared as being a 'disease free' status-

- 3 consecutive negative nasopharyngeal swabs 5-7 days apart over a 2 week period
- Negative bilateral guttural pouch lavage
- 2 negative blood test 2 weeks apart

Prevention

Isolation of bought in animals for 3 weeks and monitor for clinical signs. Some yards request pre movement blood samples for new horses, however these do not identify horses that have been exposed to strangles in the last 14 days.