



EQUINE STRANGLES

QUICK FACTS

- Equine Strangles is among the oldest, most important diseases of equines.
- The name comes from the sound the horse makes as a result of the enlarged, neck lymph nodes and infected guttural pouches.
- Strangles can affect horses, donkeys and mules of all ages, with an increased risk for those that are not vaccinated, or have not regularly mingled with other equines.
- Foals younger than four months are usually protected by passive immunity through their mother's colostrum milk.
- The incubation period for Strangles can be as short as four days, but can be as long as 12-14 days.
- Twenty percent of horses with Strangles will continue to shed the bacteria for a month AFTER clinical signs are gone. Incubating or recently recovered equines attending shows, sales, and fairs are a frequent source of infection.

CLINICAL SIGNS

- Initial signs include mild lethargy or depression, slight cough, fever of 102-103F and a clear watery discharge from the nose. Occasionally a horse may stand with their neck extended due to pain felt in the throat area.
- Latent signs include a thick yellow discharge, trouble swallowing, loss of appetite and enlarged lymph nodes in the lower jaw. As the swelling progresses the infection usually abscesses, and then begins to drain the highly infective fluid.

Older animals with some immunity may exhibit a mild form of the disease, with only a cough, mild fever and nasal discharge.

TREATMENT

If Strangles is suspected, horses should immediately be isolated, and you should consult with your veterinarian. Animals with an unknown health history, should be isolated from other equines for a month, which is the usual time for a full Strangles recovery.

Treatment will focus on the supportive care of the animal:

- Keep warm, dry and monitor their temperature.
- Provide soft food.
- Apply hot compresses to the abscessed lymph nodes to promote rupture and drainage.
- Flush draining tracks with dilute povidone-iodine solution (Betadine) or similar.
- Consult your veterinarian for antibiotic approvals.

FACTORS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO STRANGLES OUTBREAKS:

- Crowded conditions.
- Inadequate housing.
- Poor sanitation.
- Inadequate nutrition.
- Stress caused by lengthy transportation.
- The addition of new animals.



WHAT CAN OWNER'S DO TO PREVENT STRANGLES?

- Quarantine new Equine arrivals.
- Avoid mingling with other equines at shows, events and fairs.
- Avoid sharing water buckets and equipment.
- Vaccinate to reduce the severity and spread of Strangles.
- Provide clean, dry housing.
- Practice good sanitation.

QUESTIONS?

For questions regarding Equine Strangles, please consult your veterinarian. For questions regarding reportability, please contact the Maryland Department of Agriculture - Animal Health Program at 410-841-5810.