

## Strangles

**Given our Distance Horses may be yarded uncharacteristically close to other horses at events and sharing drinking water in camp and on track, we cannot ignore the possibility of a strangles outbreak occurring. Good biosecurity, hygiene and vaccination can minimise the risks. This article, brought to you by Dr. Louise Cosgrove and her team at Exclusively Equine Veterinary Services, explains the disease and how to minimise the risk of contagion at home and at horse events.**

While rarely fatal, Strangles is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can debilitate your horse's health, resulting in costly veterinary care.

Caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus equi*, Strangles most often afflicts young horses, but all horses can become affected by Strangles, especially when housed in herds. **This rapidly spreading respiratory disease is easily transferred from horse to horse by direct and indirect contact.**

**Strangles may be spread:**

- Directly – By nasal discharge, abscess discharge and coughing
- Indirectly – By handlers, clothing and equipment

**Signs of Strangles:**

Vaccination is the only method available to protect your horse from Strangles. While vaccination may not be 100% effective in preventing the disease, it has been shown to reduce the severity of symptoms, reducing the length —and cost — of veterinary treatment.

A horse with Strangles may exhibit:

- Elevated temperature
- Lack of appetite
- Depression or lethargy
- Enlarged lymph nodes, including under the jaw and in the throat area
- A thick, creamy discharge from the nostrils
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing

While Strangles is usually treated successfully, pneumonia can occur if the upper respiratory tract infection is allowed to progress to the lungs, potentially leading to abscesses and even death.

**Prevention.**

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**Treating Strangles:**

Strict hygiene is paramount when managing highly infectious diseases, like Strangles. In addition to antibiotics and rest, **horses with Strangles should be isolated immediately from other horses** and transport should be avoided as much as possible.

**It's important to remember any horse that's recently contracted Strangles may continue to infect other horses via nasal discharge for several weeks.**

**Preventing Strangles:**

If your horse is unvaccinated against Strangles, you should follow the below schedule to give them the full benefits of immunity:

- First dose – Equivac 2-in-1 or Equivac S then 2-3 weeks later
- Second dose – Equivac 2-in-1 or Equivac S then 2-3 week interval

- Third dose – Equivac S then at 6 months
- 6 month boosters – Equivac S

Having completed this schedule, an annual dose, often combined with tetanus Equivac 2-in-1) will protect your horse.

Hygiene is an important component of horse management and you should also consider implementing good hygiene into your day-to-day activities, including:

- Avoid sharing tack and equipment between horses, including brushes
- Provide each horse with their own feed and water containers
- Keep stables, yards and paddocks clean and tidy
- Install barriers in stalls and pastures to limit nose-to-nose contact between horses
- Quarantine new horses for at least two weeks for vaccination and worming checks