

Break free from strangles

Information for horse owners



What is strangles?

Strangles is a **bacterial disease causing infection of the lymph nodes of the head and neck** with the following characteristics:

- **Highly contagious**
- Spread **worldwide**
- Caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *equi*
- Typical symptoms are **fever** and **abscessation of lymph nodes** of the head and neck
- Can affect **any age, sex or breed**
- The disease is **endemic**. This means it is **regularly found** and **very common** among a particular group or in a particular area.

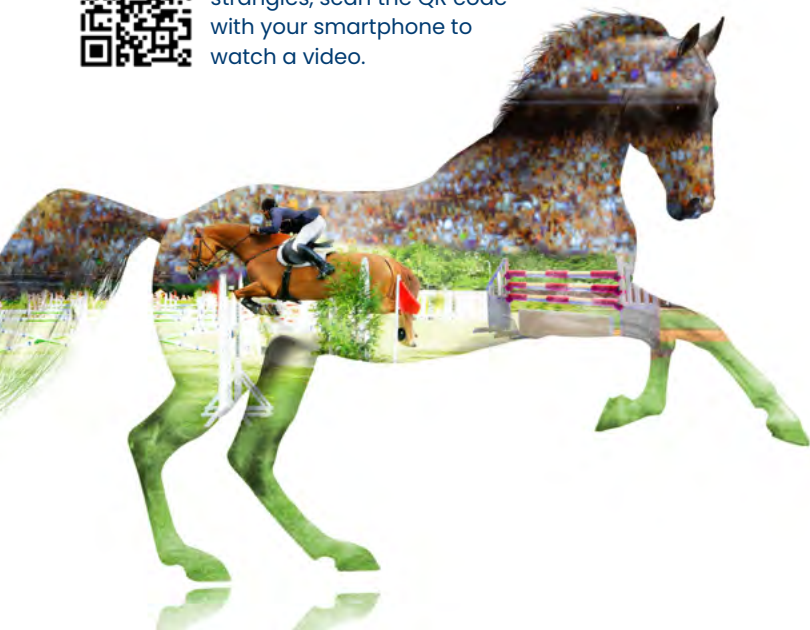
Can strangles be treated?

- Treatment options are limited
- In affected horses **supportive care** may be required.

Vaccination, in combination with biosecurity measures, helps to break the hold that strangles has on horses.



For more information about strangles, scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch a video.



What are the signs of strangles?

Horses can show **various clinical signs** of strangles. These include:

- **Fever** (body temperature $>38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$)
- **Nasal discharge**
- **Cough**
- **Depression**
- **Lack of appetite**
- **Abscesses in lymph nodes of head and neck** (and other body sites in rare cases).

No signs, no strangles?

Horses that appear outwardly healthy **may not be recognized** as having the potential to spread Strangles but it is **important to remember**:

- A horse **may be infected**, but **not yet show** any clinical signs
- A horse may have **atypical strangles**. This horse can have very mild clinical signs of strangles with no obvious abscesses
- Horses **not yet fully recovered** from the disease can **still shed the bacteria**
- In around 10% of horses, *Strep. equi* **persists in the guttural pouch after recovery** from the acute disease. These 'carriers' look healthy, but can intermittently **shed the bacteria for months or years**^{1,2} with potential to infect other horses.

If a horse shows **signs indicative of strangles**, it should be **isolated** as a **precaution**, pending veterinary advice.

Whenever you are in doubt, always consult your vet.

For more information about isolation and outbreak management, scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch a video.



Is strangles a rare disease?

No, strangles remains one of the most frequently diagnosed infections of horses worldwide.

Horses travel within and between countries to attend equine events. This creates a continuous **risk of transmission** of infectious diseases, including strangles.

There are approximately 300 outbreaks of strangles diagnosed each year in the UK³, with a similarly high prevalence of the disease believed to occur throughout Europe.

However, the **true number** of strangles outbreaks **may be even higher** as not all cases are reported to veterinarians, or confirmed through laboratory diagnosis.



Scan to visit website

¹ Newton et al., Detection and treatment of asymptomatic carriers of *Streptococcus equi* following strangles outbreaks in the UK. *Equine Infectious Diseases VIII: Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference, Dubai, March, 1998*

² Newton et al., Control of strangles outbreaks by isolation of guttural pouch carriers identified using PCR and culture of *Streptococcus equi*. *Equine Vet J*, 2000; 32:515–526. doi: 10.2746/042516400777584721

³ McGlennon et al., Surveillance of equine strangles: A new initiative. *Veterinary record*, 2019, 184(11):342–344.

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