

# 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.

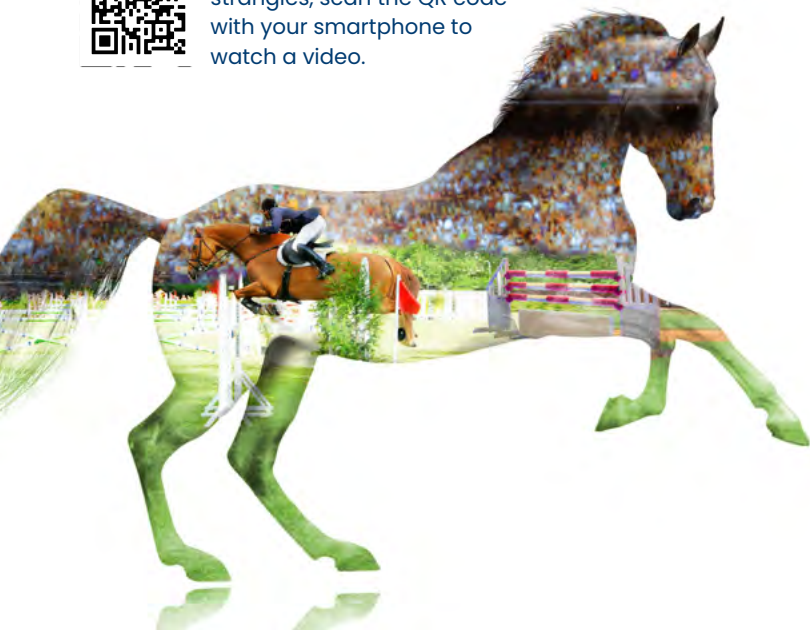
## Can strangles be treated?

- 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**<sup>1,2</sup> 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 UK<sup>3</sup>, 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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> 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

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

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