

## **Ross Dhu Equestrian Fact Sheet:**

# **Strangles**

My thanks to Arlene Holmes for writing this excellent piece on strangles and for sharing with us her personal experiences as she struggled to get her girl through the trauma of the illness and to deal with the prejudices of those around her.

## **WHAT IS STRANGLES?**

Strangles is a highly contagious disease caused by a bacterium called *Streptococcus equi*. The bacteria affects the lymph nodes and lies in the guttural pouch of the horse. The disease is easily spread to other horses through direct contact, or can be airborne. All equipment will be contaminated, buckets, rugs etc; the organisms can survive for long periods of time on walls, rugs, bedding and grass and most importantly will live in water for up to 6 weeks.

The spread of strangles can be very fast if not handled in the proper manner. The new comer onto a yard, or cold damp weather can cause horses to contract the disease. Younger horses are more susceptible to the disease as there will be no build up of immunity and may be fatal. It can be the same for the older horse as their immune system may be weaker and this also can be fatal. It can take up to 2 – 6 days before you see any clinical signs of strangles if the horse has contracted the disease.

## **TYPES OF STRANGLES**

**Bastard Strangles** – If the abscesses rupture they can spread down to the organs and also the brain and this will be fatal shutting down all the organs causing death.

**Strangles** – If the abscesses are enlarged and do not drain it will cause the wind pipe to close and could suffocate the horse causing death.

## **SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR**

1. Heavy nasal discharge
2. Coughing
3. Lethargic
4. Dehydration
5. High temperature of between 39 – 40C
6. Swollen/enlarged lymph nodes on neck and jaw
7. Loss of appetite
8. Soreness to the throat.

If your horse has any of these symptoms, isolate him away from any horses and call the vet out straight away. Most importantly let other liverys know what is happening and the owners of the yard. You will need to keep your horse isolated until the results come back from the lab, this will take up to 10 days.

## **CARING FOR A HORSE WITH STRANGLES**

1. Isolation either in a stable block with other infected horses or out in a field away from infected horses.
2. Always use a strong anti-bacterial agent to wash down tools, stable walls, and for dipping your feet in as you go in or out.
3. Always work with your owner horse and no one else's.
4. Don't walk in and out any other stables or stable blocks.
5. Try to clean up as much of the horse's discharge as possible and spray with an anti-bacterial spray to kill any organisms.
6. Make sure your horse is as comfortable as possible.
7. Give him plenty of water and soak his hay to make it a bit easier for him to eat as his throat will be sore and he might find it hard eating dry hay.
8. Keep checking his temperature to make sure it doesn't go too high.
9. Keep checking to see if your horse is dehydrated, as this can prolong the condition for a week or two.
10. Make sure you have a nice big bed so it is more inviting for him to lie down more as Strangles will make your horse very weak.
11. If in any doubt get the vet out.

Strangles is every owners worst nightmare, but it is treatable. It can take up to 8 0 10 weeks for your horse to be cleared from the disease. It is a long slow process and nit is not easy to deal with some days. But is is all about the horse and getting him better and to stop any spread of further infection.

<http://www.scottishhorsehelp.co.uk>