The Science of Healthier Animals

**STRANGLES**
*(STREPTOCOCCUS EQUI)*

**QUICK FACTS**

### General Facts

- **Strangles** is a very common and highly infectious bacterial infection. It is the most frequently diagnosed upper respiratory disease in horses 6-10 years of age.
- Abscess-forming bacterial infection—often appears as enlarged, swollen and tender lymph nodes around the horse’s head.
- Spread through direct contact, contaminated surfaces, food and water sources.
- Infected horses can spread disease without showing clinical signs, and can be a source of infection for an undetermined period of time.
- Horses are more likely to be infected and develop more severe clinical disease at a young age.
- Commonly diagnosed in adult horses, though clinical signs may not be as severe.
- Incubation period 3-14 days.
- Rarely fatal.

### Watch for These Signs

- Fever (may precede other signs by 24-48 hours).
- Abscesses in throatlatch and below the jaw (the mandibular lymph nodes).
- Nasal discharge (often thick white/yellow mucus).
- Swelling of the throat.
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Wheezing.
- Cough.

In rare cases with complications:
- Purpura hemorrhagica—bleeding from the capillaries which causes red spots on the mucous membranes and swelling of the limbs and head.
- Swelling of muscles.
- Abscesses spread to other parts of the body—known as bastard strangles.

### Treatment and Recovery

- Supportive care is the primary treatment.
- In severe cases, antibiotics may be used, but most horses recover without antibiotic treatment.
- Horses usually recover fully in 3 to 4 weeks with few complications.
- Recovered horses can become carriers and shed the bacteria intermittently.
- Infected horses may develop long-term immunity.

3-4 weeks

### Diagnosis

Diagnosis is often performed with a nasal swab or pus from abscesses submitted to a laboratory for bacterial culture or polymerase-chain reaction (PCR) testing.

### Biosecurity

- **Check temperatures** at least once and preferably twice daily. (Normal = 99°F – 101°F).
- **Isolate** any horse with elevated temperature and/or occurrence of unprovoked coughing.
- **Do not share** tack, water buckets, or feed sources.
- **Practice good hand hygiene** (hand sanitizers in absence of soap and water).
- **Clean and disinfect** hauling equipment like trailers after each use.

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**Additional Information**

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