Michigan Department of AGRICULTURE & Rural Development

Strangles

What is Strangles?

Strangles is a bacterial disease that can be spread directly through horse contact or indirectly through exposure to things like trailers, equipment, tack, clothing and facility surfaces that may have come into contact with a sick horse.

Prevention

There are vaccines available for strangles. Speak to a veterinarian to determine if the vaccination is right for your horse.
You can also protect your horses by using good biosecurity practices: avoid sharing equipment; isolate new horses or horses returning from an event for three weeks; and regularly disinfect equipment. If your horse does become ill, full recovery is likely if veterinary care is sought at the onset of symptoms.

Monitoring

In Michigan, strangles is reportable as a monitored disease and is tracked to identify trends. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) notifies the public of new cases through the Equine Disease Communication Center (www.equinedisease.org). MDARD does not quarantine the affected premises, and horse owners are advised to work with their local veterinarian.

Signs of Strangles

If your horse starts to show one of these signs, isolate immediately and contact your veterinarian:

- Fever
- Nasal discharge
- Inflammation of the throat
- Abscesses in the lymph nodes of the upper respiratory tract
- Difficulty swallowing
- Wheezing and coughing
- In rare cases, abscess formations in the abdomen or chest

Work with your veterinarian before removing horses from isolation, because although some horses may appear to be recovered, they can still spread the disease.

If you suspect an animal has strangles, please contact your veterinarian and report the case to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) by calling 800-292-3939.