

Disease Alert

From the Office of the Chief Veterinarian

Disease: Equine Strangles

Species Affected: Horses

Location: Okanagan region

Date: March, 2026

Description: Equine Strangles was detected in January at two equine boarding/lesson facilities in the Okanagan. Impacted facility managers implemented voluntary movement restrictions as well as biosecurity measures under veterinary supervision. Since January, anecdotal accounts of strangles cases have continued, however we have not received verified reports of laboratory confirmed cases.

Disease information: Strangles is an upper respiratory disease caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus equi* subspecies *equi*. Common signs include fever, nasal discharge, and swollen and draining abscessed sub-mandibular lymph nodes. Life-threatening complications include abscessed internal lymph nodes and purpura hemorrhagica. *Streptococcus equi* is very contagious and is spread from horse to horse through direct contact and by coming into contact with contaminated surfaces. Some infected horses can become long term carriers. Outbreaks are often complicated to control.

Current Recommendations:

- Minimize comingling events and movement of horses between facilities until no cases have been detected in the Okanagan for at least 4 weeks.
- Where a decision is made to go ahead with comingling events;
 - ensure all horses attending have not had a fever in the past 3 days, and are symptom free,
 - prevent contact between horses, and remind people not to touch horses other than their own or share equipment that could be contaminated with strangles bacteria.

- Monitor horses for fever and other signs of strangles (off feed, lethargy, nasal discharge, swollen lymph nodes)
- If a fever or other symptoms are noted;
 - Isolate the horse immediately. Isolating horses as soon as fever is detected can prevent infection of other horses,
 - Implement highest possible biosecurity within the facility,
 - Make immediate plans to stop movement of horses on or off the facility until at least 4 weeks after all horses are symptom free.
- Where testing for equine strangles is undertaken, it is strongly recommended that results are confirmed by an accredited laboratory.
- Consult with your veterinarian for prevention and control plans tailored specifically to your horse(s) and facility. *BC Office of the Chief Veterinarian staff are available to review facility level plans at facility owner' or veterinarians' request.*
- Although there are not mandatory reporting requirements for equine strangles in BC, veterinarians are encouraged to [Submit Reports](#) of cases to the Office of the Chief Veterinarian to allow for better provincial outbreak tracking.

Resources:

- [HCBC Biosecurity for the Equine Industry](#)
- [Animal disease information - Province of British Columbia](#)
- [Client Education Presentation: Understanding Equine Strangles – AAEP](#)
- [Strangles DZ Guidelines FINAL 2020.pdf](#)
- [Strangles | Equine Disease Communication Center](#)