

# Managing a Disease Outbreak Factsheet

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When you suspect an infectious disease outbreak on your yard, such as 'Strangles,' it is important to act straight away to reduce the risk of it spreading. This will allow you to resolve the issue more quickly and reduce the number of horses affected. Isolating affected horses is the main control method.

## What are the signs?

If your horse is displaying any of these signs, you should inform the yard owner and speak to your vet for advice:

- Elevated temperature (>38.5oC)
- Coughing
- Nasal discharge
- Swollen lymph nodes (glands)
- Abscesses
- Diarrhoea
- Abortion
- Uncoordinated or wobbly

## What will my vet do?

The vet will examine your horse and advise on the risk of an infectious disease and how it can spread. Depending on the signs, samples (eg. blood samples or throat swabs) are taken to determine the cause. Some conditions may require repeat testing and multiple samples. Your horse should remain on isolation until confirmed free of disease. Your vet will advise on any necessary treatment.

## How do I set up isolation?

As soon as you become suspicious of an infectious disease you should isolate your horse until your vet has confirmed the presence/absence of disease. The further away you can separate the horse the better, but even just a grill on the stable door and cones and tape to form a barrier around the stable will make a big difference. Ideally isolated horses should be cared for by different people, where not possible handle isolated horses last. Protective clothing such as gloves, overalls and boot covers should be worn, as well as disinfectant foot dips at the edge of your isolation area. Your horse should have its own set of

buckets, hay nets, and grooming tools, etc. that remain in the isolation area. The yard should remain closed until all horses are confirmed free from disease.

## What are risk groups?

When dealing with a yard outbreak, the traffic light system is an effective way to group your horses. Horses should be separated into three distinct groups and managed separately, each with their own equipment:

**Red** - These are high risk horses confirmed to have disease or showing any clinical signs and should be isolated.

**Amber** - These are medium risk and include any horses that have had contact with a red group horse. They need close monitoring and rectal temperatures monitored twice daily. If they develop clinical signs or their temperature is above 38.5oC, they should then move to red group and contact your vet.

**Green** - A low risk group for horses that have had no contact with red or amber horses. Monitor these horses for any signs, take their temperature, and move them into amber or red groups as needed.

## What else can I do?

Depending on how many horses become affected, it can take a long time for disease to resolve. During this time, it is important to keep the yard closed and be very careful with hygiene. Biosecurity packs are available from the practice to help you with this. Vaccination in the face of an outbreak can occasionally be useful such as with Equine Flu, but you should consult your vet about this. Once all horses are confirmed free of disease the yard can go back to normal.



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