

July 2021 Newsletter

Infectious Respiratory Diseases

Unfortunately diseases spread quickly through yards and between horses so it is important to keep an eye out for them.

What signs might a horse show if they have developed a respiratory infection?

- The horse may be quiet in themselves
- Coughing
- Nasal discharge
- Swollen lymph nodes (may be able to feel swellings under jaw)
- Increased respiratory rate and/or effort
- Poor performance
- Pyrexia (increased temperature)
- Discharge from lymph nodes in jaw



SUMMERLEAZE
FARM & EQUINE VETS



What should I do if I suspect my horse has a respiratory infection?

It is important to call your vet as soon as possible to enable your horse to be thoroughly examined and potentially tested for the possible cause. Your horse may also need medical treatment to help them. It is important that whilst you are waiting for a vet to examine your horse, you isolate them and avoid contact with other horses until you can disinfect your clothes.

What are some of the different pathogens that can cause respiratory disease?

- Strangles
- Equine Herpes Virus
- Influenza
- Rhodococcus
- Strep zoo equi

How do you test for the different pathogens?

It depends on the most likely cause of the clinical signs and how long they have been displayed for, but typically we test horses using a nasopharyngeal swab (similar but slightly longer than the COVID swabs we have all become so familiar with). We can also blood test to see if horses have had an antibody response to different diseases.

In the case of strangles we may also recommend performing a guttural pouch lavage. This is where we use an endoscope to go into an area inside the horse's head just before their larynx.

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What is strangles?

Strangles is one of the most common equine contagious diseases diagnosed worldwide. It is endemic in the UK due to the number of horses that are silent 'carriers' of the disease. These carriers show no outward signs of infection but are still able to spread the disease. These carrier horses can be difficult to identify. It is caused by the

bacterium *Streptococcus equi* which can sit in the guttural pouches of a horse for years. The only way to confirm if a horse is a carrier is to examine and lavage these pouches.

Unfortunately there is a stigma about admitting the presence of Strangles on a yard which often slows diagnosis. Strangles is not a notifiable disease, but yards with confirmed outbreaks are strongly advised to implement strict biosecurity precautions to prevent further spread, and to notify neighbouring premises. Being open and honest about an outbreak will help to reduce the spread of disease.



How can I reduce the risk of my horse catching different respiratory diseases?

Whilst at home:

- All horses should be ideally vaccinated for influenza. Those travelling internationally or competing extensively may also benefit from being vaccinated for equine herpes.
- All new horses should undergo a month of isolation after entry into the premises. Ideally this should be away from the rest of the yard (please see our how to videos on our website for further information on how to isolate horses)
- New horses should be tested for strangles before entering a yard, ideally with a guttural pouch lavage but a blood test can also be used with its results interpreted carefully.
- Use individual equipment for each horse.
- All equipment should be routinely disinfected on a regular basis.
- Regularly take horses' temperatures and isolate any horse that has a temperature of over 38.5C or that is coughing for an unknown reason and ring us.

Away from home:

- Take your own buckets, water, feed and grooming kit.
- If you do share disinfect between each use.
- Prevent nose to nose contact with other horses.
- Wash hands between handling different horses.
- After an event, all equipment, tack footwear and clothing is washed and disinfected.
- Ensure any stabling used is thoroughly disinfected.

Equine News

Don't forget to enter our competition to win two tickets to Honiton Show! For more information please see our website.

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