

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets
Food Safety & Consumer Protection Division
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Dear Vermont Equine Industry Members and Veterinarians:

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture (Agency) is aware of the recent increase in the statewide incidence of the equine disease caused by Strep bacteria and commonly called “strangles”. Given this circumstance, the Agency would like to share some information with you about this highly contagious disease. Historically, the Agency has responded to strangles reports on a case-by-case basis depending on the attending veterinarians’ confidence in the horse owners’ willingness to comply with recommended equine movement restrictions. If equine owners or managers are unable or unwilling to protect other horses by observing biosecurity practices and keeping infected horses home until they no longer pose a risk to others, the Agency has issued mandatory quarantine orders to ensure the protection of naïve horses. In an effort to prevent strangles from becoming endemic in Vermont, we are rethinking our historic protocols to ensure that we take all appropriate measures to prevent the spread of this disease. We will share pertinent updates with you as decisions are finalized.

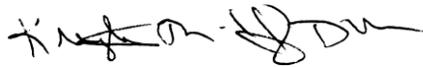
In the meantime, we would like to offer several reminders to veterinarians and equine owners/caretakers about the management of this highly contagious disease:

- **Strangles is a reportable disease in Vermont.** This means that all veterinarians are obligated to report the discovery of any horse within Vermont that is infected with, is suspected of being infected with, or has been exposed to strangles. Please note that a confirmed laboratory diagnosis of equine strangles is not required for reporting. If a veterinarian suspects equine strangles but does not have laboratory confirmation, reporting is still required. This will enable the Agency to work collaboratively with the veterinarian and horse owner/caretaker to prevent disease spread.
- **Following good biosecurity practices at all times is the most important thing equine owners and caretakers can do to protect horses from strangles and other contagious diseases.** There are measures in place, such as health certificate requirements, to prevent the introduction and spread of equine diseases in Vermont. However, these measures are not a panacea, and equine owners and managers must also assume significant responsibility to prevent disease spread. Please always follow proper biosecurity practices when introducing a new horse to your existing population and before/during/after your horse(s) travel for any reason, including to competitive events or during a change of ownership.
- **Visit <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal-health/livestock-and-poultry-programs#equine>** to learn more about equine biosecurity; establish a biosecurity score for your facility and identify areas for improvement; and gain access to signage, temperature logs and other templates that can be used to prevent or manage a disease outbreak.



The Agency appreciates the contributions of veterinarians, horse owners and managers, and equine service providers to Vermont's economy and working landscape, and to our robust equine industry. It is imperative that we continue to work collaboratively to ensure the protection of our horses. Toward that end, the Agency will continue to update you on any changes in our regulatory response to strangles and other equine diseases. In the meantime, please share this information widely with equine industry colleagues, clients and other interested persons. If you are aware of equine industry members who should be receiving these updates but are not, ask them to contact the Agency at (802)828-2421 or Kristin.haas@vermont.gov and request to be added to our equine industry distribution list. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Kristin M. Haas, DVM

Vermont State Veterinarian

