



PONY CLUB
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PONY CLUB NSW

Strangles (*Streptococcus equi equi*) Management and Response Policy

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Approved By: Pony Club NSW

1. Policy Statement

Strangles (*Streptococcus equi* subspecies *equi*) is a highly contagious bacterial disease affecting horses, ponies, and donkeys. While it has a low mortality rate, it causes high morbidity and can severely disrupt Pony Club activities. Pony Club NSW takes all suspected and confirmed cases seriously to protect horse welfare and ensure ongoing participation in events.

2. Responsibilities

Club Officials: Implement isolation and biosecurity procedures immediately upon notification of a suspected or confirmed case at any Pony Club event.

Horse Owners: Report any signs of respiratory illness, fever, or swelling in their horse's throat area to their Club and veterinarian promptly.

Zone Chief Instructors (ZCI): Support affected clubs in managing outbreaks and provide updates to the State Office if required.

Event Organisers: Follow DPI biosecurity recommendations and postpone or restrict horse movement where appropriate.

3. Identifying Strangles

Clinical signs include: Fever (39.5°C – 40.5°C), depression, nasal discharge, cough, difficulty swallowing, and swollen or abscessed lymph nodes in the throat region. Veterinary confirmation is required via swabs or PCR testing before antibiotics are administered.

4. Immediate Actions if Strangles is Suspected or Confirmed

Isolation: Move affected horses to an isolation area (Red Zone) at least 10 metres from healthy horses. Handle infected horses last.

Hygiene: Use dedicated gear. Wash or sanitise hands, and change clothes and boots after handling infected horses. Use footbaths with bleach or Virkon.

Monitoring: Check temperatures of in-contact horses (Amber Zone) twice daily for 14 days. Consult a veterinarian if above 38.5°C.

5. Isolation Periods

Confirmed infected horses: Minimum 6–8 weeks after onset of clinical signs.

Exposed horses: Minimum 3 weeks (4–6 weeks if no monitoring).

Pastures/Yards: Rest for 4 weeks before reuse.

6. Event Participation and Travel Restrictions

Horses showing signs of illness must not attend rallies, competitions, or camps. Horses from affected properties cannot attend events until cleared by a veterinarian.

7. Vaccination and Prevention

All horses attending Pony Club activities are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.

Initial vaccination: 3 doses, 2 weeks apart, then annual boosters (6-monthly in high-risk areas). Vaccination reduces severity and spread.

8. Communication and Reporting

Strangles is no longer notifiable in NSW, but clubs must inform members and other affected parties. The Pony Club NSW Office should be notified of confirmed outbreaks.

9. Clearance and Return to Activity

Affected horses can return only after completing isolation and/or returning a negative PCR test. Disinfect all gear and stables before reuse.

10. Education and Biosecurity Awareness

Clubs should include Strangles management in rallies and instructor training, promote good biosecurity, and keep horse movement records.

11. References

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) – Strangles in Horses Factsheet

https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/158456/Strangles.pdf

Pony Club NSW Strangles Response Flowchart

1. Suspect a Case → Identify signs (fever, nasal discharge, swelling).
2. Contact a Veterinarian → Confirm diagnosis and seek advice.
3. Isolate the Horse → Move to Red Zone, restrict access.
4. Notify Club Officials and ZCI if you have been to Pony Club or an event → Suspend horse movements.
5. Establish Amber Zone → Monitor all in-contact horses twice daily.
6. Implement Biosecurity → Disinfect gear, clothing, and surfaces.
7. Maintain Isolation Periods → Follow 3–8 week quarantine.
8. Test Before Release → negative PCR test recommended.
9. Disinfect and Rest Areas → Clean and rest pastures/yards for 4 weeks.
10. Communicate with Members → Update club on return to normal operations.