

CONTAGIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK – WHAT TO DO

The New Zealand Equine Health Association (NZEHA Inc.) has adopted this code for the control of equine contagious disease outbreaks and seeks adoption by each of its member organisations.

While New Zealand is relatively free of many of the world's equine infectious diseases, it faces ongoing threats. These can be contained by those in charge of horses employing good containment measures. The NZEHA recommends the following steps in the event of a suspected outbreak of either of the two most common problems facing horses, Strangles and Equine Herpes Virus:

1. Isolate the suspect horse and any horses which have had nose-to-nose contact with the suspect horse from other horses on the property.
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3. If possible, create three separated groups:
 - A - Infected horses
 - B - Horses which have had close contact with the infected horses
 - C - Clean horses
4. Separate the groups by at least 50 metres.
5. If possible, separate staff for the separate groups.
6. Call your veterinary surgeon to make a diagnosis. This will generally require sampling and the submission of the samples for laboratory testing.
7. Discuss with your veterinary surgeon isolation and handling procedures, and implement these as quickly as possible.
8. Immediate introduction of strict hygiene between the groups will reduce the risk of spread and the time taken to control the outbreak.
9. As few people as possible should handle affected horses with application of strict hygiene standards.
10. Attend unaffected horses first if separate people are not available.
11. Protective clothing, ideally disposable, should be available.
12. Ensure separate water troughs, grooming, cleaning and feeding equipment.



13. Careful disposal of bedding, uneaten food and water and, in the case of abortions, fetuses and foetal membranes.
14. Do not allow any horses onto or off the property at this time.
15. Discourage visitors to the property and confine pets such as cats and dogs.
16. Contact the owners of the affected horses and owners of other horses on the property.
17. Notify any neighbouring properties with horses which you suspect may have a case of Strangles/Equine Herpes Virus associated disease, (rhino pneumonitis, abortion or neurological disease) and recommend they check their horses.
18. For strangles a previously infected horse maybe considered free from strangles by producing negative culture or preferably PCR results to 3 consecutive nasopharyngeal swabs over a 3-week period. An endoscopically guided guttural pouch lavage is considered a more reliable sample technique than nasopharyngeal swabs.
19. In the case of Herpes virus, infected animals should be isolated for at least 4 weeks but there remains the potential for ongoing latent infection hence quarantine measures must be judiciously applied when new horses arrive on any property.
20. Owners or persons in charge should share information of the disease status of their property and horses coming in or leaving their care to enable appropriate and timely disease control measures.

