

**All clear following confirmed “Strangles” (Streptococcus equi) case at Dukes Vet Practice, Dykehead, Aboyne.**

Update 16/05/2011

We have finally had the all clear from our last two samples submitted to the Animal Health Trust and as far as we can tell we are clear of Strangles.

The original case was collected by her owner and put into isolation on her farm on 25 April. The mare was not showing any clinical signs at this point and had not had any treatment since 21/04/11. The mare was pregnancy scanned and had a guttural pouch wash taken and sent for PCR and culture on 9/05/11. She was pregnant following AI on 24/4 and also negative for strep equi on PCR and culture.

The mare that was originally in the same field as the infected mare until 12/04/11 seroconverted on her second blood sample on 26/04/11. She had had no antibiotics since 21/04/11. She had endoscopy and a guttural pouch wash taken on 03/05/11 which was negative for Strep. equi confirming she is also not a carrier. This mare went home on 8/05/11 having had two inseminations for embryo transfer. She produced three embryos from two different stallions and we currently have three confirmed recipient pregnancies from her, so clearly the strangles precautions did not affect her fertility either.

The six embryo transfer recipients in the adjacent field have now had three sets of blood samples taken for serology. On the third sample taken on 05/05/11 one mare had a weak seroconversion (0.5 – less than 0.5 is considered negative). The remainder of the mares had not seroconverted but we performed endoscopy and guttural pouch washes on this mare and the next highest testing mare (0.4). Both of these were tested and were negative for Strep. equi on PCR and culture. The remaining four recipients including the three pregnant ones all tested negative on all three samples.

The other inpatient went home on 30/04/11 having shown no clinical signs. As a precaution it was kept in isolation and blood sampled again on 05/05/11. It was still completely seronegative and has since been mixed with other horses.

The remainder of the horses on the farm have not been tested but were never in contact with any of these groups and have been kept at least a field apart from any of the above horses since the first case was suspected. None of these horses has had any treatment or shown any clinical signs of infection and as far as we are aware this is a completely naive herd. If strangles had spread to any of these horses we would have seen some signs of infection by now.

Whilst it is always difficult to say any horse is 100% free of strep equi we have done everything we could to control and monitor the disease and are as confident as we can be that we have eradicated the infection from Dykehead.

Update 22/04/11

We have now also got back test results from all of the embryo transfer recipient group which were the next closest contacts to the infected mare. These have also all come back negative confirming that this group was not the source of infection.

To date no other horse has shown signs of infection. The infected mare has not had a nasal discharge or temperature since 48 hours after discovery. We have maintained strict biosecurity protocols. This mare will be inseminated this weekend and then be collected by her owners to go into isolation on their premises. We will blood test the direct contacts next Wednesday and hope to have the results by Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April. If these come back negative it will confirm infection has not spread. In this case we will re-sterilise all areas, stables and water-troughs, feed buckets etc as far as we can and hope to be able to allow horses to come and go freely again by end of April.

We will absolutely insist that all mares coming here to stud have a Strangles blood test in the week before arrival. As in this case it may not 100% prevent a horse coming that is incubating the disease but it will minimise our risk as far as we can.

#### Update 19/04/11

The in-contact horses' blood test results have come back. All are so far negative or inconclusive for *S. equi* antibodies confirming that the infection was not present before the arrival of the infected mare from Germany on 31 March. To date none of the other horses on the farm has shown any sign of infection. We hope that the infection will be isolated to one horse and if this is the case the mare will be moved to another farm where she can be kept in isolation by her owner. We are still hoping to lift movement restrictions by end of April.

#### 18 April 2011

A mare that was imported from Germany direct to Dykehead showed signs of a respiratory infection on 12<sup>th</sup> April has tested positive for *Strep. equi*.

We have restricted the personnel in contact with this mare and the in contact group of horses to Jim Dukes and Lydia Littlejohn. They have separate clothing for handling these horses and will shower and change before leaving the farm. We have set up disinfection points at the entry to the fields where the horses are, and they are well separated from the remaining horses.

The other vets in the practice, Jeanette Adler and Mark Moseley, will have no contact with any of the horses at Dykehead.

The infected mare was blood sampled on arrival on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 and was negative for strangles antibody. The mare had colic and a raised temperature on arrival and we assumed this was due to the stress of travelling. She was treated and was apparently normal within 24 hours of arrival. After five days with daily temperature check and no further signs of infection or illness she was turned out with one other mare and in an adjacent field to 6 embryo transfer recipient mares. None of these animals is currently showing any sign of infection and they are being monitored closely. They are separated from the remainder of the horses at Dykehead and do not routinely come into contact with the other horses on the farm. There is one inpatient which may have had indirect contact and is also being monitored.

We have instigated strict biosecurity measures to prevent spread of infection

- 1 The infected mare has been in isolation since the first signs of infection were noticed.
- 2 All movements of horses on or off the premises are stopped until the end of April. This date may change and we will update this as necessary.
- 3 All possible in contacts have been informed.

In order to determine if any of these horses are exposed to the disease they will all have a blood sample to check their antibody level and be re-sampled in 2 weeks so long as none of the group show clinical signs to see if there is any evidence of exposure to the infection. If there is any evidence of infection the affected horses will be isolated and treated and a sampling protocol to confirm freedom from disease will be instigated.

If you have any queries or require clarification please contact the practice and ask to speak to one of the vets.

Jim Dukes

***Updated 18<sup>th</sup> April 2011***