***Streptococcus equi* Infection (Strangles)**

**General Information**

Strangles is an upper respiratory infection caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus equi*. These bacteria tend to form abscesses, primarily in the lymph nodes of the throat. The bacteria are transmitted by direct contact of the infected horses with other horses, or indirectly by flies and contaminated buckets, pastures, fences, or stall surfaces. If protected by a coating of dried pus or mucus, the bacteria can survive up to several months in the outside environment. Horses can continue to shed the bacteria for weeks or months after infection.

**Clinical Signs**  
  
Horses develop clinical signs within 3-14 days after infection. The initial signs are depression, fever up to 104F (may not be as high as the fever caused by viral upper respiratory infection), and a purulent (snotty) and sometimes profuse nasal discharge. Infected horses tend to stand with the neck extended because of throat pain. Swelling in the throat area progresses to formation of abscesses, which rupture in 7-14 days. Occasionally the bacteria settle in other areas of the body, such as the abdominal cavity, resulting in a slowly progressive infection. These horses have a dull haircoat and possibly an intermittent fever. Rarely a horse will develop an allergic reaction after strangles exposure. This reaction, called purpura hemorrhagica, can be serious and difficult to treat.

**Important Points in Treatment**

*Monitoring:* Severely affected horses should be checked several times daily. Measure the rectal temperature and be sure the animal is breathing normally. Also, observe its consumption of feed and water.

*Hot Packs:* At least twice daily, apply a hot pack to the swollen, sore areas where the abscess is forming. This aids healing and helps the abscess mature.

If an abscess ruptures and drains, continue hot packing and gently massaging the area to aid removal of pus, and apply topical antibiotic ointment. Even large ruptured abscesses heal well, with minimal scarring. Also apply some fly repellent around (but not on) the abscess area.  
  
*Medication:* Your veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics or other medication.

**Preventing the Spread of Strangles**

In an outbreak of strangles, restrict movement of horses in and out of the area.   
Provide each horse with its own feed and water bucket, and clean these daily.  
Spray contaminated environmental areas with disinfectant.  
If possible, limit the amount of people caring for the sick horses to prevent spreading to healthy horses.