

Memo

Date: March 8, 2021

To: Red Shores Tenants

From: Red Shores Racing

RE: Strangles Q&A

Strangles Q&A

To provide as much information as possible, here are some common questions and answers. It is important to consult with your veterinarian if you have any concerns.

Q. Why was testing done on all horses at Red Shores at the Charlottetown Driving Park?

A. You are aware the initial cases of Strangles onsite was identified in November 2020. Subsequently, last month a second case was identified. Based upon veterinary advice, it was then determined that to accurately identify horses on site which may have been exposed to the Strangles bacteria (either on or off site), and the prevalence of Strangles in the barnyard, a complete testing of all horses was required. This would identify horses whose PCR tests show levels below and above the benchmark of 40.

The costs for the initial round of tests are being paid for by the PEI Harness Racing Industry Association, Red Shores, and the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission.

Q. What do the PCR levels mean?

A. The PCR test indicates the presence of DNA of the bacteria *Streptococcus equi.*, but this test is unable to determine if the bacteria is alive or if there is residual DNA from dead bacteria. If the bacteria is alive, there is a potential that this horse could infect other horses. The PCR test is measured in Ct or “threshold cycle”. A Ct of < 40 is positive, 40-44 is equivocal and > 44 is negative. There is some evidence that the lower the Ct level, the more likely the horse it to have live bacteria and the greater the chance is that horse will infect other horses. It is estimated that this level is around 34, therefore the higher the number towards 40, the less likely they are to be infective to other horses. Unfortunately, until the test comes back negative, we must assume that any horse with a PCR Ct of < 40 is a potential risk to others and this horse must be managed with appropriate biosecurity measures.

Q. What did the results show?

A. Overall, **NO** horses were identified as having clinical signs of strangles at Red Shores Charlottetown, from the recently completed round of tests. Based upon PCR test results with a Ct level < 34, and in an abundance of caution, there are three horses who have been moved to the Paddock barn which has been established as a Isolation Barn. These horses are not showing clinical signs of strangles (lymph node enlargement, nasal discharge, high fevers, etc.)

Q. My horses tested below 40 what now?

- A. Our local veterinarians have discussed with each impacted trainer/owner the protocol for the continuation of stabling on site for horses testing below 40. These horses have been isolated from negative horses, physical barriers established as deemed necessary, and biosecurity REQUIREMENTS explained.

Remember, the greatest risk to having the prolonged presence of horses testing below 40 is ignoring biosecurity protocols. Horses have been isolated from each other; it is essential people do the same.

As well, vigilance is a key, and for these horses continue twice daily temperature checks and close evaluation of horse health signs such as eating patterns. Etc. If your horse has a fever above 38.4 C or 101 F talk to your veterinarian.

Research show that fevers develop within cycles. Some horses may develop fevers in the morning, some in the afternoon and some have fevers consistent throughout the day. To maximize detecting a fever twice-a-day temperature taking is recommended.

Q. My horse(s) tested negative, what now?

- A. The negative test means that your horse(s) have a PCR value above 44. For these horses continue twice daily temperature checks, close evaluation of horse health signs such as eating patterns, nasal discharge, lymph node enlargement, etc. If your horse has a fever above 38.4 C talk to your veterinarian.

Research show that fevers develop within cycles. Some horses may develop fevers in the morning, some in the afternoon and some have fevers consistent throughout the day. To maximize detecting a fever twice-a-day temperature taking is recommended.

Q. Will further tests be conducted?

- A. Yes, testing of horses deemed necessary for a second test is scheduled to be carried out Monday, March 22nd. The horses which will be tested at that time are horses with a current PVR level below 40, as well as horses which are deemed to be close exposures to a low level positive. Appointments will be arranged by your veterinarian.

No widespread testing of currently negative horses is currently being planned.

Q. Where can I get more information?

- A. Further Information on Strangles and recommended Biosecurity Protocols etc. are available on the PEI Harness Racing Industry Association, PEI Standardbred Horses Owners Association, and Red Shores websites.

Lee Drake
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Red Shores