

# Strangles Symposium Executive Summary: Working Together to Stamp Out Strangles

A meeting of invited industry leaders and respected equestrians was held 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at the University of Edinburgh (Royal Dick) Vet School with sponsorship from Redwings Horse Sanctuary and British Horse Society

*The meeting was coordinated and delivered collaboratively by a committee with members from the following organisations:*





*"Learn more about how others in the professions and industry view the challenges and opportunities to change how things are done that will reduce the risk of strangles without impeding the smooth running of equine businesses and activities."*

Expectations given in response to the pre-event survey by a workshop attendee

*This executive summary was prepared by Jo White, Human Behaviour Change for Animals and funded by The British Horse Society and Redwings Horse Sanctuary. The full report can be found on the Redwings website.*

*"Why? Because if we understand why humans do the things they do and what drives them to change, we will be more effective at making the world a better place for animals."*



## Executive Summary Event Overview:

The Strangles Symposium: 'Working Together to Stamp Out Strangles' brought 39 respected practitioners and industry leaders together from across the equine sector and community to discuss how they could collaborate to improve the prevention and management of strangles. The goal being to eradicate the UK's most prevalent infectious equine disease by inspiring and motivating action that ultimately leads to positive behaviour change across all parts of the equine sector. Held on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March at The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh the Symposium was sponsored by Redwings Horse Sanctuary and The British Horse Society (BHS), with collaboration from The University of Edinburgh, the Animal Health Trust (AHT), World Horse Welfare and Scotland's Rural College (Premium Assured Strangles Scheme). The day provided the opportunity for attendees to listen to presentations covering the latest research and developments, participate in a panel discussion sharing knowledge and personal experience of the disease, and engage in a workshop designed to explore the barriers, opportunities and develop an action plan to take the next steps towards eradicating strangles. Actions moving forward include examining the costs of testing for strangles, targeted screening, and celebrating open positive communication by those who are working to prevent the disease or control infection, to remove any stigma around strangles and encourage positive collaboration and support for all.

## Summary of workshop suggested outcomes:

### Working with the industry

#### Cost of testing, follow-up and treatment:

- Speak to the veterinary industry, insurers and pharmaceutical companies regarding incentives and support for testing, compare with other similar schemes, and explore other routes for support (e.g. sporting authorities).

#### Targeted screening:

- Approach insurance companies and promote to the veterinary profession the benefits of PPE screening.
- Ensure the pre-export, pre-import of high value horses as a first step.
- Examine demonstrating the risk related to strangles to encourage testing.

#### Lack of information on current cases (public):

- Consult with Horse Trust/Animal Health Trust to explore a strategy to support the surveillance project and ensure effectiveness regarding behaviour change. Ascertain the potential of the Equine Register / Scottish Equine ID for biosecurity.

### Communications and Education

#### Encourage and celebrate good/positive behaviour:

- Engage livery yard and promote Redwings positive-style content to celebrate their good practice.

#### Addressing the stigma and shame of strangles:

- Examine how to best access horse owners who are disinterested or disengaged from campaign, identify an influential champion who people connect with (celebrity?), exploring how they can be utilised through to model, influence, encourage, persuade and motivate positive behaviours.

#### Communications and education:

- Utilise forums/groups to harmonise advice and guidance, and ensure it reaches its desired audience.
- Use an interactive approach that incorporates sharing what is out there: Facebook groups, social media, developing materials with consistent information and messages.
- Keep messages simple and straight forward which will require similar resources needed for communications, together with outreach to find the hidden horse owners, and prioritising yards to focus on in particular areas.

#### Equine event communications, education and governance:

- Develop a code of conduct for individual event/venues; moving towards a uniform code of conduct for National Governing Bodies (NGBs). Direct information to all competitors.
- Face-to-face communications to engage venues and encourage them to display the strangles policy or the code of conduct.
- Form an NGB consultation working group, top down communications and a specific timeframe.

#### Delivery of existing information:

- Support network development and dissemination of information packs.

## Other proposed recommendations and action points

### Creating a network

1. Identify the best forum for collaboration that will enable the actions from the Symposium to be progressed. Consideration should be given as to whether an existing group or network could take on this role to maximise efficiency and avoid duplication (e.g., the organising committee for the Strangles Symposium, the BEF High Horse Health Committee, the Equine Disease Coalition or another existing group), or if a new tailored network is required to aid in championing particular areas.
2. Identify who will provide the resource and capacity to: develop and implement plans of action, undertake research, develop project plans for behaviour change intervention design and implementation, and access funding to support delivery.
3. Build on the recommendations from the Symposium by developing SMART objectives to be carried out by these agreed individuals, groups or organisations.
4. Provide the Symposium attendees and relevant interested parties with an update on the progress made since the Symposium and the future plans; engage their support.
5. Follow-up on the individual pledges from the Symposium to support people in implementing and delivering on them.

### Research and development

6. Gain expert behaviour change support to effectively utilise current models in analysing the problem, identify target behaviours and developing and designing behaviour change interventions.
7. Review the current materials available to ensure a consistent shared message and approach for communications, guidance and educational materials.
  - Consider hosting them in a central place and disseminating this to equine service providers and governing bodies with a recommendation to make members aware of a central hub. For example, there is potential for the BEVA website to act as a central hub including links to all key resources in a similar way to obesity (<https://www.beva.org.uk/Resources-For-Vets-Practices/Clinical-Practice->

[Guidance/Obesity-in-horses](#). NEWC could have a similar webpage on biosecurity and other organisations could also be considered - HBLB, KBHH and AHT).

- Consider utilising the behaviour framework drafted by WHW/Behavioural insights team to map existing interventions being delivered by different organisations against identified high level objectives, to establish what is currently taking place, where there are gaps, and how the current interventions and possible future interventions could be monitored and evaluated for impact.
8. Build on existing and undertake new audience research
- Understand who the target audiences are and how to reach them.
  - The best way to communicate with them to deliver positive sustainable change in relation to strangles.
  - Discover why they have or have not taken part in existing schemes.
  - Utilise this information to inform the design of behaviour change interventions.
9. Continue to undertake research and evaluation to:
- Understand the micro-behaviours being or not being performed, including identifying where people are in the process of change, and how to reach those that are not engaged, interested (in 'pre-contemplation' or 'contemplation').
  - Identify the problems, barriers and opportunities to change.
  - Undertake a literature review and evaluation of the current evidence on the costs of an outbreak.
  - Investigate pros and cons of licencing and how Equine ID regulations can support better biosecurity.
  - Test assumptions and identify unforeseen consequences.
  - Test potential behaviour change interventions, for example how best to engage horse owners, communicate effectively to motivate, encourage and empower change, and what behaviour change techniques are needed.
  - Continue with the Biosecurity Project Yard Level Research currently taking place
  - Evaluate the impact of existing campaigns/interventions with the intention of identifying areas for strengthening impact and complementarity (e.g., Redwings Strangles Pledge, vets distribution of Strangles information [Redwings], KBHH and yard excellence scheme, PASS, BHS approvals process) and make recommendations.
  - Investigate veterinary support to clients in proactive and reactive guidance; make recommendations to enable vets to include strangles in client education, and explore their willingness to participate in surveillance dissemination.
  - Redwings to consider publishing the strangles survey and interrogate the data to help test assumptions and answer some of the questions found on page 20 of the Symposium report.
  - Consider the case for strangles being listed with the OIE, examining the pros and cons of this approach (e.g. reporting of cases).

## HBC Approaches

10. Consider the role of habitual behaviour formation in interventions related to good biosecurity (HBCA is undertaking ongoing work in this area). Recognised the importance of small steps in addressing strangles – through the use of micro/tiny behaviour changes.
11. Look to actively reward positive behaviour, including:
- Celebrating and communicating success stories that are relevant to the identified target audiences, which positively impact emotionally, motivating and empowering change.
  - Providing help to undertake this change, for example social support (friends, family, equine professionals), tips on setting up quarantine, or encouraging yards and horse owners to welcome the identification and treatment of carriers during screening.

12. Look to use values-based communications and positive framing in any messaging and educational materials, for example, biosecurity is something responsible and caring people do. Assess the extent to which this is present in existing campaigns and materials and its efficacy.
13. Effectively raise awareness of the 'intervention' vaccine due in 2020 and develop support to look for a vaccine that provides greater long-term cover.
14. Examine and promote the benefits of certification and pledges.
15. Look to address/breakdown the barrier of cost (e.g., the business case, subsidies, incentives, benefits etc.). Look to insurance companies to ensure no financial disincentives against screening and clearing strangles carriers, and explore opportunities for them to support this work and potentially incentivise it.
16. Look to collaborate with those undertaking mapping of strangles and related activities to establish what is going on where. This could help to communicate outbreaks, cases, success stories, concerns, certification, and projects more effectively, and be utilised to provide support for the different audiences
17. Share this report with City and Guilds Examination board and consult regarding how and where strangles and biosecurity occurs in relevant land-based educational curriculums.

The full report can be found on the Redwings Horse Sanctuary Website [www.redwings.org.uk](http://www.redwings.org.uk)