

5 August 2026

HRNZ Directive for Strangles disease management

(Version 4 – 05/08/26)

Effective Date: 6 July 2026

This Directive relates to all standardbred breeding, training, trialling and racing activities. This Directive replaces all directives relating to Strangles Disease Management issued by HRNZ previously.

Purpose

Harness Racing New Zealand (HRNZ) has issued this Directive to reduce the risk of Strangles spreading within the harness racing industry while aiming to allow racing and trialling to continue with minimal disruptions.

This Directive reflects the current disease situation, where Strangles is known to be present within the Waikato region. The measures contained in this Directive are precautionary, evidence-based, and intended to minimise the risk of disease transmission between horses at racecourses, training facilities and trial venues.

This Directive may be updated by HRNZ from time to time as necessary to reflect changing circumstances and best practice in the prevention, detection, and management of Strangles.

This Directive takes effect on 6 August 2026 and remains in force until amended or revoked by HRNZ.

Enforceability

This Directive (and the protocols set out below) applies to all Trainers, Breeders and Clubs, licensed persons, owners, and all other persons (including all persons associated with the management, care, control, or superintendence of harness racing) to whom the Rules of Harness Racing apply.

The possible consequences of a failure to adhere to this Directive are detailed in Section 3 of this Directive.

Background

Cases of Strangles have reinforced the need for disease control measures to protect the health and welfare of horses racing and trialling in New Zealand.

Strangles is a highly contagious bacterial disease capable of spreading rapidly through direct horse-to-horse contact and indirectly through contaminated equipment, vehicles, clothing and other objects. The disease may be transmitted before clinical signs develop, and horses exposed to infection may appear clinically normal while incubating the disease or shedding the bacteria.

Race meetings, trials, workouts and training centres present an increased biosecurity risk because horses from multiple training establishments are brought together, often sharing transport, stabling and other infrastructure. Early identification of potentially infected horses,

combined with timely reporting and appropriate movement controls, is therefore essential to minimise the risk of disease transmission and the resulting impacts on horse welfare and racing operations.

New Zealand has a strong record of industry-led biosecurity practices. However, effective disease management depends upon prompt reporting, consistent health monitoring and appropriate veterinary assessment. Trainers, breeders, owners and veterinarians are the first line of defence in identifying suspected cases and preventing wider spread within the standardbred population.

Accordingly, HRNZ has determined that additional temporary biosecurity measures are necessary. These measures are intended to be practical, proportionate, evidence-based, and enabling racing, trialling and workouts to continue while appropriately managing the current disease risk.

HRNZ will continue to review these measures in consultation with the Racing Integrity Board, the Equine Veterinary Branch of the New Zealand Veterinary Association, the NZ Equine Health Association and other industry stakeholders.

1. Definitions

1.1 For the purpose of this Directive:

Meeting means a Race or Trial meeting and includes Workouts that are timed over set distances. For the purposes of this Directive, a Meeting is in progress from 7:30 am on the morning of the Meeting until 30 minutes after the finish of the last race or trial conducted at that Meeting.

Strangles Red Zone means any geographic area or areas within which Strangles has recently been detected within the population of horses that are active in racing or training.

Currently, the entire Waikato Local Government Region is a Strangles Red Zone. There have been no cases of Strangles detected within harness racing and/or the Standardbred industry.

Horse means any horse including a horse used as a travelling companion horse or a Clerk of Course horse.

Strangles means the equine disease caused by *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *equi*.

1.2 Any other term used in this Directive shall have the meaning given to it in the Rules of Harness Racing unless the context requires otherwise.

2. Trainer obligations

[Note: horse health monitoring and recording requirements upon Trainers are also requirements for Clerks of Course with respect to their horses]

A Trainer who has a horse which is engaged to participate in any Meeting, or any person who transports, or brings, a horse to a Meeting must comply with the requirements listed below, in accordance with the following:

- For all meetings the requirements of section 2.2 (relating to the HRNZ Strangles Temperature Monitoring and Health Declaration) must be fulfilled for five days immediately prior to the Meeting and the morning of the Meeting
- *For race meetings after 6 August 2026* Trainers of horses that are not permanently or temporarily stabled within the Strangles Red Zone do not need to complete the HRNZ Strangles Temperature Monitoring and Health Declaration (section 2.2).
- Requirements for the transport of horses (section 2.5) from the North Island to the South Island continue to apply. From 6 August 2026, there are no requirements for the transport of horses from the South Island to the North Island.

2.1 Notification of Strangles

Notification of Strangles cases must be made by email to the RIB Veterinary Services Manager via: vet@rib.org.nz

If Strangles is confirmed by veterinary diagnosis or laboratory testing in any horse in the care of a Trainer, Breeder, Licensed Person or any other person to whom the Rules apply, the Trainer, Breeder or such other person must advise the RIB Veterinary Services Manager immediately upon such confirmation being made.

A Trainer of a horse which is diagnosed with Strangles or which a veterinarian has diagnosed symptoms consistent with Strangles must notify the RIB Veterinary Services Manager immediately and withdraw or scratch all stable runners entered at upcoming Meetings.

All further training and horse movements must be halted immediately and the stable premise placed in biosecurity restrictions. Subsequent movement of horses must be coordinated under the direction of the RIB Veterinary Services Manager.

The Trainer, Breeder or other person to whom the Rules apply, must comply with all instructions or directions issued by HRNZ or the Racing Integrity Board (RIB) concerning testing, isolation, movement restrictions or other disease control measures.

The biosecurity restrictions may be lifted if the RIB Veterinary Services Manager is satisfied that the affected horses have been isolated and managed with evidenced effective stable biosecurity measures under veterinary guidance. A clearance will be issued by the RIB Veterinary Services Manager with reliance on written advice of the stable veterinarian and, the stable may be permitted to resume training and racing activities with health monitoring and recording as detailed under this Directive.

2.2 HRNZ Strangles Temperature Monitoring and Health Declaration

For every horse stabled in the Strangles Red Zone that is engaged to participate in or be present at a Meeting, the Trainer must complete the HRNZ Strangles Temperature Monitoring and Health Declaration (the “Declaration”).

The completed Declaration must accompany the horse to the Meeting and must be retained by the Trainer.

At a Meeting, the completed Declaration must be produced immediately upon request by a Stipendiary Steward or RIB Representative.

This Declaration requires:

- the monitoring of the horse while at rest in its normal environment, commencing 5 days immediately prior to the Meeting date and including the morning of the Meeting;
- the recording of the horse's rectal temperature twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening with a minimum of 8 hours elapsing between consecutive readings; and
- that the Trainer must immediately consult their veterinarian if the horse records a resting temperature greater than 38.5°C.

Temperature measurements must be accurately recorded on the Declaration, detailing:

- the date;
- the time each temperature is taken;
- the recorded temperature; and
- any relevant observations regarding the horse's health.

The Trainer must certify on this form that:

- the recorded temperature records are accurate;
- the horse has been monitored in accordance with HRNZ's Strangles requirements;
- the horse has appeared to be clinically well and has not shown signs consistent with Strangles, including fever, nasal discharge, coughing or enlarged lymph nodes; and

2.3 Serum Amyloid A (SAA) testing

Note: not required for race meetings held on or after 30 July 2026

2.4 Health monitoring

The Trainer must monitor all horses under their control for signs of illness. A horse must not race, train or trial if it appears to be unwell, with symptoms including but not limited to:

- fever;
- nasal discharge;
- coughing; or
- enlarged lymph nodes.

2.5 Transport of horses

(a) Requirements applying to all horses travelling from the North Island to the South Island

All horses transported from the North Island to the South Island must:

- be clinically healthy and not display signs consistent with Strangles, including fever, nasal discharge, enlarged or painful lymph nodes, abscessation, difficulty swallowing or any other suspicious clinical signs;
- have their health monitored for the five days immediately preceding transport;
- have their rectal temperature recorded twice daily, at least eight hours apart, during the five days immediately preceding transport;
- not have recorded a rectal temperature greater than 38.5°C during the monitoring period; and
- immediately notify the RIB Veterinary Services Manager if Strangles is suspected or confirmed before transport.

In addition to the above requirements, horses travelling from any location in the North Island to any location in the South Island, including South Island racehorses, breeding horses and companion horses returning from a North Island visit, must submit the [RIB North Island to South Island Strangles Travel Declaration](#) form and obtain the prior written approval of the RIB Veterinary Services Manager before travel.

Where the horse: is not known or reasonably suspected to have contracted Strangles; and has not been located on an affected or suspected property; and has not had any credible exposure to a horse affected by Strangles:

- a registered veterinarian must collect a nasopharyngeal wash or nasal swab;
- the sample must be submitted to an accredited diagnostic laboratory for PCR testing for *Streptococcus equi*; and
- the horse must obtain a negative PCR test result before travel.

Where the horse: is known or reasonably suspected to have contracted Strangles; or has been located on an affected or suspected property; or has had potential exposure to a horse affected by Strangles:

- a registered veterinarian must perform an endoscopically guided guttural pouch lavage;
- samples collected from the guttural pouch(s) must be submitted to an accredited diagnostic laboratory for PCR testing for *Streptococcus equi*; and
- the horse must obtain a negative PCR test result before travel.

(b) Requirements for transport from the South Island to the North Island

From 6 August 2026, no requirements are imposed for the transport of horses from the South Island to the North Island.

3. Compliance

Failure to comply with this Directive (and the requirements set out above) constitutes a breach of the Rules of Harness Racing

Failure to comply with this Directive will result in the horse being scratched from the Meeting, and may result in:

- refusal of permission for any horses from the Trainer's stable to race or trial;
- the issue of further directions by HRNZ or the Racing Integrity Board; and
- disciplinary action under the Rules of Harness Racing.

Providing false or misleading information in any declaration or record required under this Directive may constitute a Serious Racing Offence.

Please direct all enquiries to welfare@hrnz.co.nz