

# What is Pigeon Fever, aka Dry Land Distemper in Horses; How to Treat It Nutritionally and How to Prevent it Using Homeopathic Nosodes

Pigeon Fever is an “abscessing” disease of mainly sheep and cattle, which also affects horses. It is a disease typically characterized by large abscesses in the chest area, which also may be found in the neck, abdomen, internal organs, or legs. Some people think that their horse has strangles when they come down with this disorder, but they don’t!  
(See Photo)

Pigeon Fever is known by many names depending upon the location of the abscesses and which form it takes: Pigeon Fever, Dry Land Strangles, & Equine Dry Land Distemper are all common names. The name “Pigeon Fever” is the most often used name when diagnosed because of the propensity of the organism to infect the chest, causing it swell out.

Pigeon Fever is caused from a gram positive bacteria which lives in the soil and can enter the horse’s body through wounds or broken skin, and through mucous membranes.

It can be transmitted by various flies, including house flies and probably horn flies.

It particularly lives well in the soil in dry environments or in areas suffering from drought type conditions. Many veterinarians and researchers are now



speculating that drought conditions may be contributing to the current (2004-2005) outbreak that has occurred in Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado, with some cases being reported in Wyoming and in the Mid-West. Once the disease takes hold in a particular season, hundreds of cases can be diagnosed, appearing to be an “epidemic”, yet in other years the condition seems to be “endemic” or rare, or even disappear or possibly lie dormant in the soil waiting for the right conditions to occur.

The disease usually occurs in arid parts of the West in fall and early winter, with the highest incidence in September, October and November. The causative bacteria, which are transmitted by flies, live in the soil and can enter a horse’s body through wounds, broken skin and

mucous membranes.

### **Clinical Signs**

Clinical signs can include lameness, fever, lethargy, and weight loss; it can also occur in any age, sex, or breed of horse, but most cases occur in young animals (less than five years of age), Dry land/Pigeon Fever distemper might take weeks or months for abscesses to develop fully after the horse is infected. This means that horses might be transported to a region where dry land distemper is unknown, develop active abscesses or sores, and because of the scarcity of the disease in that region, not be diagnosed properly, or at all. Abscesses usually form deep in muscles, such as the pectorals. This causes swelling that looks like a puffed-out pigeon breast, thus giving the name pigeon fever to the disease.

These abscesses can be very large and might require hot poultices, lancing, flushing, or draining. Some cases might require surgical intervention to promote drainage. The disease occurs in three forms--external abscesses, internal abscesses, or limb infection known as ulcerative lymphangitis.

### **Treatment**

Although pigeon fever can generally run its course in a few weeks without treatment, many veterinarians recommend the use of anti-inflammatory drugs, pain relievers and antibiotics. Medication eases the discomfort of afflicted horses that suffer from chest pains and have difficulty walking.

I recommend using Equine-Zyme, along with colosturm and beta Glucan to help boost the immune system and to assist with healing the open areas that either burst on their own or that a vet with lance to allow drainage. Also clean the area daily with betadine.

While the prognosis is generally good for a complete recovery from this ailment, some horses might have a recurrence of abscesses or sores once treatment is stopped. Others might seem to be cured, only to develop more clinical signs in a matter of months, depending upon the horse's immune system and his ability to overcome it. Again, supporting the horse with Equine-Zyme, colostrums and beta Glucan can help to prevent a re-occurrence.

Horse owners who suspect that their animals may have contracted pigeon fever should contact a veterinarian for a diagnosis and a proper treatment regimen as well as how to protect other horses in the herd.

### **Prevention**

It is recommended that contaminated stalls, paddocks, and utensils be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected where possible once an outbreak has occurred to protect the other horses. Because flies can carry the bacteria, pest control can serve as a deterrent to spread or continuance of the disease.

To protect the other horses in your herd, I also recommend that they be given a Nosode for Pigeon Fever, so that they can naturally then ward off any

exposures and prevent this from occurring.

### **Nosodes**

Nosodes are really homeopathic “immunizations” as opposed to “vaccinations”. They are made the very same way as a homeopathic remedy, by dilution, and succussion, except they are made from the “discharges” when an organism (animal or human) gets sick. For example, a distemper Nosode is made from the nasal discharge from an infected dog, a Parvo Nosode is made from the diarrhea of an infected animal, and the EPM Nosode is made from the spinal cord of an EPM positive horse. A Pigeon Fever Nosode is made from the scrapings of the abscesses from a horse with an active case.

Secretions from an infected animal are serially diluted and succussed 30 times to give the Nosode its energy so it can protect the body from disease. Protection is different from that caused by vaccines in that detectable antibodies are not directly attributed to the Nosode, but to the exposure to the disease. Nosodes are available for all species and can be prepared in just hours instead of years for vaccines. Nosodes are extremely safe as no chemical preservatives or live viruses or bacteria are present.

Nosodes have been used for over a hundred years in homeopathy and have an excellent track record of prevention and treatment of illness and disease.

### **Nutrition/Supplements**

Equine-Zyme + (with colostrum and Beta Glucan)  
Vitamin C (up to 15,000 mg per day)  
Vitamin E  
Beta Carotene

#### *About the author:*

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