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Worming Client Information

Guidance on the best ways to control worms in horses has changed a lot in recent years. Worms are becoming resistant to the drugs that are in some of our wormers, and the more we use these drugs, the more the development of these resistant worms increases. There are only four different drugs that are currently used in equine wormers so it is very important that we preserve their effectiveness by using them responsibly.

The modern way to worm horses is to have a plan for each individual horse that includes regular worm egg counts and to worm for specific worms that don't show in worm egg counts at certain times of year.

Worm Egg Counts (Strongyle & Ascarids)

Worm egg counts detect levels of Strongyle and Ascarid worms and should ideally be carried out every 12 weeks during the grazing season (**March to October**) Horses are then treated according to the results. Horses with a worm egg count above 200 eggs per gram should be treated.

Encysted Small Redworm (Cyathostomes)

Small red worms are the most common and dangerous parasitic threat to horses health. They reproduce in large numbers and the larvae burrow into the gut wall where they hibernate (encyst). Large burdens of encysted redworm that emerge from the gut can cause diarrhoea, colic and can even be fatal, especially in young horses. Large numbers of encysted redworm can be present in horse's guts but because they do not produce eggs they cannot be detected in faecal worm counts.

Encysted redworm should be targeted once yearly in late autumn or early winter using a single dose of Moxidectin (**Equest/Equest Pramox**) or a 5 day course of Fenbendazole (**Panacur 5 day guard**). However there is known resistance in small redworm to Fenbendazole.

Tapeworm

Tapeworm do not show up in faecal worm egg counts so therefore should be targeted twice yearly (usually spring & autumn) with praziquantel (**Equest pramox, Equimax, Noropraz, Eqvalan Duo**) or a double dose of Pyrantel (**Strongid P**).

There is a blood test and saliva test which can be used to test for tapeworm in horses, which can be used yearly in spring time to detect levels.

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Bots

Bots do not show up in faecal worm counts but should be treated annually after the 'first frost'. Most wormers treat bots.

Pinworms

Pinworms do not cause a problem to the horse's digestive system or cause any internal damage, however the eggs that are laid around the anus can cause irritation that can lead to infection.

If a pinworm problem is suspected then a worm egg count is unlikely to show the eggs because they are not laid in the droppings.

Most equine wormers are effective against pinworm.

Pasture Management

Managing your pasture in the right way can improve the quality of the grazing and reduce the number of worm eggs that your horse can pick up.

The more horses you have grazing in any one area the greater the potential worm output and infestation. If your horse does not have access to sufficient grass they will graze the rough areas, near droppings, where there is a higher concentration of worm eggs increasing the likelihood of your horse ingesting worm eggs. One horse per acre of grazing land is usually ideal. Poo picking every 2-3 days reduces the potential contamination from larvae.

Rest pastures, however this is not always possible especially on busy livery yards where grazing is limited. Consider grazing horses with other animals such as cattle and sheep. Most horse worms will not infect cattle and sheep and vice versa, and they are very good at 'hoovering' horse pasture.

Worm egg count all new horses and worm them accordingly and keep them off the pasture for 48 hours.

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