

## Equine worming advice

Almost all horses will have worms, and the aim of worming is not to eliminate worms from a property, but to manage worms carefully so that horses do not have high worm burdens causing health issues.

There is also resistance to all of our wormers emerging, so it is important for both our own horses, and for the future health of horses to use wormers carefully, so that we try to slow the spread of resistance. It is unfortunately unlikely that any new classes of wormer will be produced in the foreseeable future to combat resistance.

In any herd of horses, most of the worms will normally live in a small number of the horses. These may be young, old or unwell horses, or some horses are naturally inclined to have higher worm burdens. This is one of the main reasonings behind faecal worm egg counting (FWEC) horses in spring/summer.

### Tapeworms

- Tapeworms are not a common cause of health issues in adult horses, but can cause severe colic, digestive issues and weight loss

### Redworms (Strongyles)

- Redworms are split into large and small redworms.
- Small redworms are the most common worms in horses, they can cause loss of condition and digestive issues, but also burrow into the gut lining in autumn ('encysted redworms'). These hibernating worms can then emerge in large numbers in the spring, leading to severe disease and can be fatal.
- Large redworms are now rarer, but can cause severe disease in the intestines, and by migrating through the body.

### Ascarids (Roundworms)

- Roundworms are mainly of significance in young horses, as older horses normally develop immunity.
- However, they can cause severe disease in young animals.

There are other types of worms that can be discussed with our vets if concerned.

## GENERAL WORMING ADVICE

### Tapeworms

- Tapeworms can be tested for via a saliva or blood test
- Alternatively, they can be routinely treated for every 6 months, normally in spring/autumn.

### Encysted redworms

- Encysted redworms can be tested for via a new blood test, (usually taken after the first frost, when less worms should be picked up on pasture).
- Alternatively, a one-off treatment using a product that kills encysted redworms should be used after the first frost, but before Spring, and this can be combined with a tapewormer.

### **Spring/summer worming**

- Many horses will not need worming over spring/summer, as they will not develop high worm burdens.
- However, the only way to assess whether individual horses need worming is to submit a fresh faecal sample for testing at the practice. We will then advise on whether worming is appropriate, and if so, which wormer should be used.
- A fresh faecal sample, with samples taken from a few faecal balls should be submitted, and we can normally report the results within the same day.
- FWECs should be carried out every 6-8 weeks over summer, and on all horses.
- Even if a horse has a low FWEC number, this does not mean that the next count will also be low.

**The above guidelines are meant as a guide, and will not fit all horses or premises, for individual advice, please contact us to discuss your horse/herd's needs. This is especially important if managing pregnant mares, youngstock, or if you have concerns about any individual horse's health.**

### **HOW TO WORM YOUR HORSE**

- The volume of wormer in a tube is often only just over teaspoon... this means that a tiny blob spat out can result in a significant under-dosing and ineffective worming. The wormer must be pushed to the back of the horse's mouth, and the head must be held up until the horse has swallowed. Our vets are happy to come and teach or administer wormers on a visit if you are struggling!
- Horses should be kept stabled for 48 hours after worming if possible, this is due to the amount of chemical passed into the faeces affecting the bugs that live in the pasture and soil. This is particularly important if your field has a watercourse running through or near it, as most wormers are extremely toxic to all aquatic creatures.
- Wormers must be disposed of securely, and new and old tubes must be kept well away from dogs and other pets, as they can cause severe issues and death in other pets, even with the small amounts left in used tubes.

### **HOW CAN I REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF WORMS WITHOUT WORMING?**

- Regular poo picking (ideally daily) is the best way to clear worm eggs from your field, and prevent horses becoming reinfected
- Resting fields (ideally for over 12 months) regularly to allow worm larvae to die off. Grazing sheep or cattle on rested land can help clear up eggs, and they can't become infected with horse worms
- Keeping stocking densities low, and not overcrowding fields
- Quarantine and worm egg count any new arrivals before turning out onto pasture