

### Worming horses

There are various different types of parasitic worms that affect horses, and their impact on the horse varies between the different species. The treatment of each varies also.

The parasitic worms that have the biggest impact on foals and weanlings are the **Ascarids**. High levels of infection are associated with respiratory symptoms, unthriftiness, rough hair coat, weight loss and colic.

**Tapeworms** present in the gut of horses can cause severe colic.

The larval stages of the group **Cyathostomins'**, can cause death if they emerge in mass numbers in the gut.

**Large strongyles** are quite rare, but if present can cause colic.

**Pinworms** and **bot larvae** cause less severe effects on the horse, but can still have a negative impact on the horse's health.

### Faecal egg counting

The best way to manage worming in horses is to perform faecal egg counts (FEC/WEC) every 3 months. This will enable your veterinarian to advise you on which animals need worming and which don't. It is very common within a group of horses for a few horses to be shedding large numbers of worm eggs, and most not to be shedding substantial amounts. So, the horses that need treating are treated, the horses that do not are not. Saving you money on wormers and not putting chemicals into your horse that are not required.

WEC's only reflects the adult parasite burden of the horse, not the larval, **tapeworm**, **pinworm** or **bot larvae**.

### Serum or saliva antibody ELISA

This is the method by which to test for **tapeworm**. It is recommended to undertake every 6 months (Spring/Winter). This is undertaken either via a blood sample obtained by your vet, or a saliva test which you can take yourself.

### Sticky tape

**Pinworm's** (*Oxyuris equi*) lay their eggs around your horse's bottom, causing them to itch ('seat itch'). For your veterinarian to diagnose they will tape a sticky tape strip from the skin

close to the rectum, and examine this under the microscope to look for the presence of eggs.

### Cyathostome larvae?

There is currently no commercially available test to detect [cyathostomin larvae](#). It is therefore recommended to treat strategically to target these stages.

What is recommended is to treat with a product that contains moxidectin (Equest/Equest Pramox) in the winter regardless.

### Wormers available

There are 4 main classes of wormers available for horses, and within these classes various different brands. The different classes of wormers work in different ways and are effective against different types of internal parasites.

It is always best to seek advice from your vet regarding which type of wormer to use at different times, and ideally based on WEC results.

### Pasture management

The aim of pasture management is to prevent horses from having contact with contaminated pasture or feed.

- Droppings should be removed from the pasture at least twice weekly, either manually or using a pasture sweeper.
- Chain harrowing is only advisable if animals are removed from the pasture and a period of dry weather is followed by a period of hot weather.
- Alternating grazing with cattle/sheep – horses and cattle/sheep have their own unique internal parasites, so alternating grazing can have a ‘dilution effect’ on the parasites on pasture.
- Rotating pastures to allow paddocks to be rested.
- Avoiding overcrowding, so horses are not forced to graze pasture closely associated with droppings.
- Moving horses to clean grazing immediately after treatment should be avoided.
- New horses should be quarantined, WEC and treated with wormers as required, before introduction onto pasture.
- Good stable hygiene with regular mucking out.



## Foals

Foals require a worming program slightly different to adult horses. Please consult your vet to discuss this.

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