White Lodge Veterinary Clinic

Equine Worming Advice for Adult Horses

Almost all horses will have some level of worm burden, which is normal and healthy. Therefore, the aim of worming is not to eliminate all worms, but to prevent high worm burdens and associated disease. Individual worm burden varies dramatically between horses; 20% of horses will excrete 80% of the total worm eggs in a herd. It is therefore important to perform targeted worming (using specific wormers on specific horses), rather than blanket worming the whole herd. We now worm based on the horse or herd RISK (see table on page 3).

Worms

Tapeworms (Cestodes)	Not a common cause of health issues in adult horses Large burdens can cause colic, digestive issues and weight loss
Large Redworms (Strongyles)	Not commonly a problem in horses Large burdens can cause obstructed blood vessels, colic and peritonitis
Small Redworms (Cyathostomins)	The most common worms in horses They have a quick lifecycle (6wks) and are found in adult or larval stages: ▪ Adult stages – problematic if in large numbers in the horse ▪ Larval stages – burrow into horse's gut wall → can cause *serious damage* when they emerge out of the gut wall (usually in Spring)
Roundworms (Ascarids)	Significant in **young horses** → can cause severe disease (colic, weight loss and obstructions)

Worm Egg Counts (WECs)

- Detect the number of worm eggs in your horse's droppings, which gives an indication of the worm burden of your pasture and RISK of associated disease to your horse
- Recommended at least **three times a year** (during the summer grazing period) for most adult horses. More tests can be performed in high-risk horses
- Do **not** detect the larval stages of small redworm because the larval stages do not produce eggs (you will need to do a blood test to detect these)
- WECs are **not** accurate at detecting tapeworm (blood test or saliva test to detect these)

Latest BEVA guidelines for testing for encysted red worm and tapeworm

- If saliva tapeworm testing is low two years running (and risk deemed low), it is not necessary to test or treat further for tapeworm unless change of circumstances
- Blood testing for encysted red worm should be reserved for those horses at particular risk → otherwise, rely on WEC results

WEC Sample Collection

- Collect a small amount of a fresh dropping into a clean bag or pot
- Take the sample from a few different faecal balls of the same dropping
- The sample can be stored in the fridge (will keep 4-5 days if stored correctly)
- The results of the test are usually reported within the same day.

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Why perform WECs?

- TARGERED WORMING WILL REDUCE RESISTANCE
  - Resistance to wormers is increasing, with **no new drugs on the horizon**
  - WECs help determine which horses need worming and which do not, therefore reducing the amount of wormer used (therefore slowing resistance)
  - WEC also help determine which wormers to use so that we use a wormer that is effective against the type of eggs we need to treat (therefore slowing resistance)
  - Targeted worming has been proven to reduce worm burdens effectively, reduce use of wormers by 80% and reduced colic episodes on yards

- HAS YOUR WORMER WORKED?
  - A faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) will determine if the treatment has been effective or if there is resistance to the wormer. This requires a WEC before and two weeks after treatment

Suggested Testing Protocol for Adult Horses

	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Nov-Feb	Tapeworm saliva test (no need to test or treat if low result for 2 consecutive years)	Tapeworm saliva test	Tapeworm saliva test
	No need to worm for larval stages	Rely on previous WEC to decide on larval redworm worming	Rely on previous WECs to decide on larval redworm worming
April/May	WEC	WEC	WEC
June/July	WEC	WEC	WEC
Aug/Sept	WEC	WEC	WEC

Advice for worming new horses to the yard

- WEC and saliva test for tapeworm **before introducing to pasture**
- Worm if appropriate **(keep stabled for 72 hours post worming)**
- Perform FECRT to ensure no resistance to wormer and to prevent resistant worms being introduced onto the property

Good Management – good pasture + yard management will reduce worm burden and the use of wormers

- Remove droppings from pasture at least 3-4 times a week
- Avoid overgrazing
- Alternate grazing every year for mares and foals where possible
- WEC all animals in a herd, at the same time, regularly throughout the grazing period
- Quarantine and worm egg count any new arrivals before turning out onto pasture
- Resting fields over summer to allow worm larvae to die off
- Grazing sheep or cattle alongside horses to break the lifecycle of the equine worms

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Risk Table for Adult Horses (developed by CANTER guidelines)

	Low	Moderate	High
Clinical History	No history of parasite-associated disease in last 24months	Suspected parasite-associated disease in last 24months	Confirmed parasite-associated disease in last 24months
Age Profile	5-20yr	5-20yr	<5yr or >20yr
N# of Horses	Low stocking density (>2 acres per horse)	Moderate stocking density (1-2 acres per horse)	High stocking density (<1 acre per horse)
WEC	Regular WEC <200epg	Regular WEC 200-500epg	Regular WEC >500epg
Tapeworm Test	<20% of herd above low score OR Individual horse that has low score	20-50% of herd above low score OR Individual horse that has intermittent mod/high score	>50% of herd above low score OR Individual horse that consistently has mod/high score
FECRT	Efficacy of all wormers	Efficacy of all wormers	Lack of efficacy of wormers
Environment	Closed herd or individual horse	Occasional newcomers into herd	Frequent movements in/out of herd
	Good pasture management	Moderate pasture management	Poor pasture management
	Effective quarantine procedures	Inconsistent quarantine	Non-existent quarantine