Management of internal parasites

Managing internal parasites is important for our horses' health. There are limited drugs available to control different types of worm. We are seeing resistance to some of these drugs, making them less effective. No new drugs are currently in development, so if worm populations become resistant to the existing ones, there will be no effective way of controlling internal parasites. **This would be disastrous for horse health.**

To avoid this, we should take a targeted approach to using anthelmintics (de-wormers) only when necessary (determined by testing) and ensuring the correct dose is used. Overuse, inappropriate use and incorrect dosing of de-wormers has led to a loss of effectiveness due to the worm population surviving exposure to wormers and becoming resistant.

We recommend a combination of the following methods to reduce the worm population and need for worming.

- Targeted worming practice: Your vet can advise you on a specific parasite management plan. This will usually include carrying out a number of faecal egg counts through the year, tapeworm/redworm testing and giving de-wormers when identified as necessary through these tests.
- Poo picking paddocks at least 3 times a week
- Keeping horses away from muck heaps
- Rotating fields regularly
- Avoiding over stocking fields
- Rinsing poop scoops, rakes and barrows, especially if it is then used to transport hay & nets
- Avoid moving horses for at least 3 days if they have been wormed
- Only worming when necessary
- Cross grazing with other species such as sheep

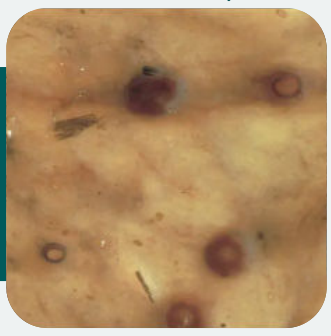
Common Types of Worms:

Mare and Foal Sanctuary[1] 2023

Small and Large Redworm

The Small and large redworm, otherwise known as strongyles, are found in the hind gut. They are the most common and can be red or white. Large red worms are rarely found in well managed horses. They can lead to weight loss, diarrhoea and colic.

Lab Equine[2] 2024



Encysted Redworm

The Encysted Red worm burrow into the gut wall and become dormant in cold months, emerging in large numbers in early spring. They can lead to diarrhoea, colic and can be fatal.

Research Gate[3] 2014

Tapeworm

Tapeworm are white and segmented. They attach at the junction of the small and large intestines and survive on food ingested by the horse. They can lead to weight loss, diarrhoea and colic.

Mare and Foal Sanctuary[1] 2023

Round worm

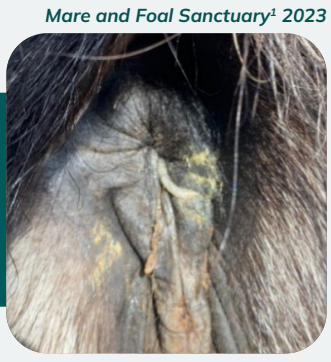
Round Worm, otherwise known as ascarids, are usually only a problem for youngstock as equines develop a resistance between 6-12 months. They travel to the small intestine migrating to the liver and lungs, feeding along the way. They can grow up to 50cm long and in large amounts can cause blockages and damage to the lungs. They can lead to coughs, nasal discharge, weight loss, diarrhoea and colic.

Horse & Hound[4] 2024

Bots

Bots are flies that lay yellow eggs on the horse's coat, commonly on the legs. Horses ingest them while grooming, allowing the larvae to burrow into their mouth and eventually attaching in the stomach. They remain there for 8-12 months before being released in droppings. It's important to remove eggs when they are seen. They rarely present clinical signs but in heavy burden can lead to gastric ulcers.

Mare and Foal Sanctuary[1] 2023



Pin worm

Pin worm are creamy white and pin thin. They live in the colon and lay eggs around the anus. While they don't cause worm burden or internal damage, the fluid the eggs are laid in can cause irritation, itching and sores.

1 The Mare and Foal Sanctuary <https://www.mareandfoal.org>

2 Lab Equine (2024) Encysted Small Redworm [on-line] Available from [on-line] <https://labequine.co.uk/encysted-small-redworm/> [Accessed: 15/11/24]

3 Research Gate (2014) Comparison of the Sensitivity of Coprological Methods in detecting Anoplocephala Perfoliata Invasions [on-line] Available from [on-line] <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/nvasion-in-the-patent-period-horse-number-14-All-tapeworms-with-gravid-segments_fig3_261955601> [Accessed: 15/11/24]

4 Horse & Hound (2024) Q&A: How to Deal With Bot Eggs on Horses [on-line] Available from [on-line] <https://www.horseandhound.co.uk/horse-care/horse-care-tips/qa-all-about-bot-eggs-37720> [Accessed: 15/11/24]