

Intestinal worms can seriously damage your horse and in some instances can kill it. Implementation of an effective deworming programme is the best form of prevention.

What are worms?

Worms are internal parasites (which live within, and take nourishment from their host- in this case the horse).

The most common worms are:

Small Redworms (Cyathostomins)



Large Redworms (Strongyles)



Ascarids (Roundworm)

Bots



Tapeworm



Laval Cyathostomins can be fatal in up to 50% of cases, even in animals that are treated intensively. It is therefore particularly important that all horses are wormed in the late autumn/early winter with a wormer that is effective against encysted larvae parasites in the gut wall (such as moxidectin- Equest).

How do you know if your horse has worms?

Even a horse that appears to be in good health may have worms causing internal damage. Worm infestations are most commonly found in young and older horses as well as those on multi-horse premises e.g. Livery yards. A worm burden can result in:

- Weight loss
- Diarrhoea
- Colic
- Loss of appetite
- Dull, staring coat

A faecal worm egg count done at Abbey Equine Clinic will help to establish whether worms are the cause of the problem. A fresh sample of faeces (about 10g) should be placed into a clean plastic bag, and labelled with both your details and your horse's name. The sample should then be delivered to the practice. If, for some reason, you are delayed bringing the samples into the practice, store the sample in a cold place to prevent the eggs from hatching.

How do horses get worms?

Your horse will get worms if it is turned out with other horses or donkeys that have worms, because the pasture will be contaminated with eggs and larvae. Your horse will eat these as it grazes. Pastures can remain contaminated for a considerable time.

Bots can affect any horse as the flies move from field to field. The eggs are laid on the limbs of horses and are then ingested when the horse grooms that area. The larvae then migrate to the stomach where they cause irritation.

Worming your horse

There are two methods of worming your horse:

ROUTINE worming means you worm your horse throughout the year, at the interval described by the wormer you have chosen.

STRATEGIC worming means you only worm your horse if a faecal (poo) sample suggests that the horse has a high worm burden.

WORMING PROGRAMME:

A practical worming programme can combine these two methods. Choose a wormer for the year from one of the drug groups below and use it twice a year with samples taken between.

- Avermectins (e.g. Ivermectin, Moxidectin)
- Benzimidazoles (e.g. Fenbendazole)
- Pyrantel (e.g. Pyratape, Strongid P)

REMEMBER TAPEWORM TREATMENT (at least once a year) to be done in the spring or autumn. For this you will need Praziquantel (Equitape) or a double dose of Pyrantel (Pyratape , Strongid P)

SMALL REDWORM Larvicidal dose should be done between November and January – Equest (Moxidectin) or 5 days of Panacur Equine Guard. This will cover encysted larvae

Below is an example of a worming program for the year which includes tape worm treatment, small redworm larval treatment and worm egg counts between these to see if worming is needed during the grazing season. Whilst this example is a good starting point, worming programmes are best tailored to the individual horse so please contact the surgery to discuss your individual circumstances.

A suggested practical worming programme would be:

Spring	Spring/Summer/Autumn	Late Autumn/Winter
Redworm + Tapeworm		Encysted larvae + Bots
Year 1: Ivermectin + Praziquantel	Worm egg count + Ivermectin if indicated	Moxidectin
Year 2: 2 x Pyrantel	Worm egg count + Pyrantel if indicated	Moxidectin

Is your worming programme effective?

- Taking a faecal sample 2 weeks after worming and bringing into the practice for a faecal worm egg count (WEC), is the best way to check that your worming programme is being effective and you haven't got a resistance problem on your yard. Ideally, an additional sample taken before worming will allow the reduction in eggs as a result of the worming to be assessed.
- A blood sample would be required to check for tapeworm.

STRATEGIC WORMING:

You only worm the horse if the faecal worm egg count (WEC) is positive. If the horse does not require worming a repeat sample is taken in 12 weeks.

The advantages are:

- More cost effective
- Less resistance builds up, as you are only using wormers when they are required.

It is important to remember that WECs don't pick up tapeworm burden therefore it is important to worm for tapeworm either in the spring or the autumn.

It is also important to use a laval dose once yearly between November and January to get the small redworm encysted larvae.

FOALS:

Foals are particularly susceptible to worm burdens as they have not built up their natural resistance, and can suffer long-term damage if not wormed appropriately. They also are infested with other species of worms acquired from the dam in the milk and through eating the mare's dung. Mares should therefore be wormed before foaling. The worming of foals should start at two to four weeks of age. Treatment should be repeated every four weeks until six months of age. Thereafter they can start on your normal worming programme. Beware that not all wormers are suitable to be given to young foals. (Equest should not be given before 4 months of age, Pramox before 6.5months)

An example worming programme for a foal

Aged 2-4 wks: Ivermectin or Fenbendazole (Panacur) N.B. If Panacur is used it should be given at higher dose rates

4 wks later: Strongid P or Pyratape P (Pyrantel Embonate)

4 wks later Ivermectin or Fenbendazole

Etc to 6 months

December: Onto Normal Equine Worming Programme

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WORM CONTROL PROGRAMME:

- Use correct dose for weight of horse/ pony- weigh tapes are very useful for getting the horses weight (these can be collected from Abbey Equine Clinic).
- New arrivals to the yard- should be wormed for all parasites on arrival (e.g. Equest Pramox). They should also be kept isolated in a stable/ separate field. (Ideally this should be for 2 weeks for other infectious diseases such as Strangles, Ringworm, Herpes Virus and Equine Influenza)
- Pick up droppings AT LEAST TWICE WEEKLY.
- Paddock Rotation – resting the paddock for at least 3 months if possible, or grazing with sheep or cattle (as horse worms are unable to survive in these animals)
- Have a worming programme that everyone sticks to on a livery yard. Get all owners to worm their horses on the same day with the same product.

For any further worming advice please call us at the clinic and speak to Karen Williams our qualified equine nurse.

HORSE WORMERS AVAILIABLE:

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Duration of Action	Action
EQUEST	MOXIDECTIN	13 weeks	Kills everything except tapeworm Effective against encysted larvae. Can be used from 4 months of age Can be used in pregnant mares.
EQUEST PRAMOX	MOXIDECTIN and PRAZIQUANTEL	13 weeks	Kills everything including tapeworm in a single dose. Can be used from 6.5 months of age Not to be given to pregnant mares.
EQVALAN BIMECTIN VECTIN	IVERMECTIN IVERMECTIN IVERMECTIN	8 weeks 8 weeks 8 weeks	Kills all except tapeworm and encysted small redworm larvae.
STRONGID P PYRATAPE	PYRANTEL	4-6 weeks	Double dose require to kill tapeworm Can be used in foals from 4 weeks. Kills round worms, does not kill bots or encysted small redworm larvae.
EQUITAPE	PRAZIQUANTEL		Tapeworm only
EQVALAN DUO	PRAZIQUANTEL and IVERMECTIN	8 weeks	Kills all at a single dose, except encysted small redworm larvae. Can be used from 2 months of age.
EQUIMAX	PRAZIQUANTEL and IVERMECTIN	8 weeks	
PANACUR EQUINE GUARD	FENBENDAZOLE	4 weeks	5 day course kills encysted redworm larvae, does not kill tapeworm. Some evidence of resistance. Safe to use in pregnant mare and foals.