

Deworming

New research is constantly coming out on parasitology and deworming in large animals. This information has changed some of the recommendations we are making and may differ from what you have heard in the past.

Rotational deworming (giving different dewormers every 1 to 4 months) was used to prevent serious disease from parasites. Unfortunately, this has led to significant parasite resistance over the years. To combat this issue, we have been minimizing our dewormer use based off of fecal tests.

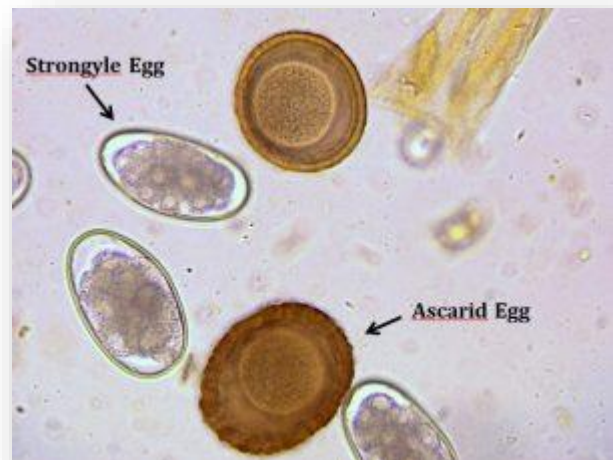
Recently, gastrointestinal and skin diseases caused by parasites are making an appearance again with less frequent deworming. To find a balance, we will be using new guidelines to maximize prevention of disease and minimize resistance to dewormers on your farm.

Fecal Tests

A fecal egg count (FEC) will show if your horse is shedding a low, moderate, or high amount of parasite eggs. Most of these are from small strongyles, a type of nematode. FED will show if there are other types of parasites shedding eggs, which may require different dewormers

However – We now know the amount of eggs shed in the feces does not necessarily correlate with the actual worm burden inside the gut. A low or negative fecal does not mean the horse is parasite-free, and high fecal egg count does not mean the horse has a severe parasite load.

FEC are still useful - Horses shedding a moderate to high load of eggs will require more frequent deworming to decrease pasture contamination. We can also use FECs to check for resistant parasites on your farm by testing a FEC before deworming and repeating a FEC 10 to 14 days after deworming. There are also many other types of fecal tests which can help diagnose causes of diarrhea or other GI upset, but these would be recommended by your veterinarian at the appropriate time.



Samples for FEC should be collected within 12 hours of defecation – the fresher, the better. Place 1 to 2 fecal balls in a zip-lock or other sealed container. Place sample in the fridge or cooler (for up to 2 days) if you are not dropping off the sample right away. Liquid diarrhea cannot be used for FEC. Unless we are checking for resistance, wait at least 2 to 3 months after deworming to test your horse

General Guidelines

As with many things, one size does not fit all – recommendations may differ based on your horse’s medical conditions, age, housing environment, and lifestyle. Immunocompromised and other at risk horses such as those with Cushing’s disease, or Inflammatory Bowel Disease, will have different needs than your average healthy horse. Please consult with one of our veterinarians at your next appointment to determine the best plan for your animals.

- Adult equines should be dewormed one to two times a year, regardless of fecal egg count, with ivermectin or moxidectin.
- Each fall/winter, after the first good frost, a dewormer containing praziquantel should be given to treat for tapeworms, which don’t usually show up on a fecal.
 - Praziquantel is combined with either Ivermectin or Moxidectin – examples include Zimectrin Gold, Equimax, and Quest Plus.
- Check a FEC in late spring/early summer to determine your horse’s shedding status. Horses shedding a moderate to high load of eggs will require more frequent deworming to decrease pasture contamination.
- Avoid deworming every horse on the farm at once. After deworming, the surviving resistant worms/eggs will multiply. By staggering deworming, the resistant eggs will be diluted out by the average eggs passed by non-dewormed horses.
- Wait at least 1 week after deworming before moving a horse into a fresh/new pasture to avoid contaminating it with resistant eggs.
- Donkeys do not absorb fenbendazole well. If treating for roundworms, use Oxibendazole.

Young Horses

Foals are more susceptible to parasites and require different management.

2 to 3 months old – deworm for roundworms with Fenbendazole (Safe-Guard, Panacur) Oxibendazole (Anthelcide EQ), or Pyrantel Pamoate (Strongid)

4 to 6 weeks before weaning – Check FEC to decide between deworming for roundworms again vs deworming with ivermectin

Weanlings should be turned out on the “cleanest” pastures with low-shedders

9 months & 12 months old – Check a FEC again to determine if more roundworm treatment is needed. At one of these ages, use an ivermectin with praziquantel to treat for tapeworms

Yearlings & 2 year-olds should be treated like high-shedding adults, especially if living on pasture, and dewormed 3 to 4 times a year