



## KINGS BOUNTY EQUINE PRACTICE

### EQUINE WORMING

All grazing horses are likely to have worms, as parasitic intestinal worms are common. Most horses have such a low number that they generally do not cause any harm. Problems arise if worm burdens increase as large numbers of worms can cause colic, diarrhoea and weight loss, as well as simply general lethargy, dullness/dull coat and poor performance.

Good worming control aims to reduce the overall level of pasture contamination with the worm eggs and to keep the worm burden in an individual horse low enough to prevent disease and to stimulate the horses' immunity against further worm infections.

Prevention of significant infestation should be the primary aim of any control strategy. To reduce pasture contamination with eggs, steps that can be taken include:

1. Picking up droppings regularly and frequently.
2. Avoid overstocking.
3. Isolate and test any new horses (WEC) before worming and before introducing to the herd if necessary.
4. All horses on the premises or within the same group should be tested and treated (if necessary) at the same time
5. Rotate paddocks frequently to avoid overgrazing. Cross-graze (sheep or cattle) wherever possible to clean up any deposited eggs and larvae.

*There are **THREE** main components to a worm control programme*

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. EFFECTIVE PASTURE MANAGEMENT</li><li>2. USING EFFECTIVE ANTHELMINTICS (WORMERS)</li><li>3. IDENTIFYING AND MONITORING HORSES WITH SIGNIFICANT WORM BURDENS</li></ol> |
|---|

Worm control is not simply dosing your horse on a regular basis - there are rules that should be followed in order for worm control to be effective. As an owner you should be aware of the benefits of **STRATEGIC WORMING**. These include:

- a) Identifying and monitoring the horse to ensure their individual needs are considered. A worm egg count is used to monitor horses and identify those with significant worm burdens.
  - Horses with **low or zero WEC** should be **tested every 4 months** whereas those with a **significant WEC** should be treated and retested **2-3 months later**.
  - It is advisable to **re-test any horse with a very high burden** (ie >1000 eggs per gram) again after treatment to check for any resistance.
  - If there is a suspicion that the worm population may be resistant to a particular wormer, a WEC should be performed just before and then two weeks after treatment with a wormer to see if there is a significant reduction in egg numbers. If not, then

either the wormer was not appropriate for that worm or the population is resistant and another product must be used.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT WEC'S ARE NOT RELIABLE FOR TAPEWORM DETECTION. Tapeworms can be tested for with the use of a simple blood ELISA test that should ideally be done in the spring.**

- b) Knowing and understanding the type of wormer being used and ensuring it is:
  - The correct one for the time of year
  - The most appropriate one for the worms your horse may have
  - Given at the correct dose. We would recommend weigh taping your horse to give a more accurate estimate of weight.
  - Not spat out by the horse when given.
  
- c) Awareness of the different types of internal parasites and their effects on the horse (please see our download on Common Equine Endoparasites for an overview on the most common and important internal parasites affecting horses and types of wormers that can be used against them).

### STRATEGIC WORMING

In adult horses, worming may need to be carried out at intervals throughout the grazing season. On heavily stocked premises, it may be necessary to worm more frequently than in cases where only one or two horses are grazed over a large area or management is good. The use of **WECs** to help to identify and quantify the parasite burden can help to **reduce the number of treatments** required and may help in avoiding parasites developing resistance to available anthelmintics.

Currently there are **no new anthelmintic drugs** coming onto the market so we must take care to limit further resistance developing.

Products used for interval worming include Ivermectin, Moxidectin, Fenbendazole, Oxfendazole and Pyrantel etc.

Ideally **foals** should be treated for the first time at about **6-8 weeks** unless a problem is suspected, in which case earlier treatment will be indicated.

**Emerging small Strongyles** cause disease in the winter so it is advisable to **treat against the encysted stages in autumn/early winter. These immature small Strongyles do not lay eggs so this treatment should be done regardless of the WEC results.** Specific treatment in the spring can also be helpful in reducing the number of these worms in the horses environment.



Drugs currently licensed against encysted larvae are single treatment with **Moxidectin (Equest)** or **5 days of Fenbendazole (Panacur Guard)** at recommended doses.

Tapeworm treatments should be given in the **autumn and the early spring**.

Where a disease problem caused by worms is identified, specific treatment against that parasite should be started regardless of the time of year.

If you have any queries or concerns please contact us at Kings Bounty Equine Practice. The vets can help formulate a risk assessment, which they can then use to help you develop an effective worming programme specific to your yard and horses, as good advice for one situation will not necessarily work for another.