

EQUINE NEWSLETTER – DEWORMING

Spring is here and many of us are gearing up for the upcoming riding season. Traditionally, this is the time of year that we take care of annual vaccinations, check teeth and deworm the horses

Deworming is something we all do but in many situations the program being implemented is ineffective. All horses carry worms, even though they are routinely dewormed. Depending on pasture rotation, horse numbers and weather conditions parasite pressures can vary. In Ontario, because of our cold winters many of the larval stages of the intestinal worms are killed off but unfortunately this is not true for the eggs. Large numbers of the eggs can survive extreme cold and hatch in the spring when conditions allow. Parasite eggs have been reported to survive on pasture for more than 3 years.

Deworming programs should be designed to reduce the number of internal parasites as well as the number of infective larval stages on pastures, which in turn reduces the rate of re-infection. There is an ongoing debate regarding how often that horses should be dewormed. Ideally each horse should be given wormer in the spring prior to being put on pasture. This will reduce the number of eggs being shed in the manure. It is important that all horses in the barn be done at the same time, otherwise the rate of re-infection will be greater than we would like. A second worming should be done mid-summer when pastures carry the highest number of infective larvae. This is also the best time of the year to do a fecal test. A third dewormer should be given in the fall after the first hard frost. The frost will kill off a significant number of infective larval stages of the worms and will ensure that the horses carry a minimal number of intestinal parasites through the winter months. This is also the time of year we recommend deworming for tapeworms.

Equally as important as the timing of deworming, are the products we use. Rotating the wormers you use is always a good idea but make sure that the active ingredient (parasiticide) is not the same. There are a lot of products that are

made by different companies that are essentially identical. It is interesting to note that Quest and Eqvalan are different products but the molecules are so similar that the two don't fit well when you are trying to rotate wormers.

The program that we are promoting at Tavistock Veterinarians for 2009 is:

Spring = Eqvalan (Ivermectin) Responsible for controlling strongyles/bots/pinworms and roundworms. Ivermectin is fast acting and kills more life stages of the parasite.

Summer = Panacur (Fenbendazole) Responsible for controlling pinworms/small strongyles/roundworms/whipworms and hookworms. This is a slow acting dewormer and safe to be used in foals.

Fall = Equimax (Ivermectin/Prazinquantel) Responsible for controlling strongyles, pinworms and roundworms. Safe and effective for use in foals.

With this type of program, we are hoping to optimize the health and well being of your horses.