

Summer Worming

The typically warm and moist conditions of the British summer are ideal conditions for parasites, with infective larvae on the pasture at their greatest levels during this time of year.

The ways horses are kept influence the impact of parasites. Wild horses are free to graze over very large areas and so avoid eating from pasture that has been contaminated with potentially infective droppings, meaning that parasites are less able to infect horses and thus unable to complete their lifecycles. For domestic horses; however, grazing is often limited thereby increasing their exposure to infection; as such action is required to reduce the number of infective larvae on the pasture.

This reduction of pasture contamination is achieved by a combination of worming and pasture management, with the most common parasite present on the pasture being the small redworm. A member of the roundworm parasite class, the small redworm is found universally wherever horses are grazed.

Summer Worming Treatments:

- **Routine Roundworm Control:** Routinely treat against roundworm. Dosing intervals based on active ingredient, i.e. moxidectin every 13 weeks, ivermectin every 8-10 weeks, pyrantel every 4-8 weeks, fenbendazole every 6-8 weeks or mebendazole every 6 weeks. When planning your routine worm control it is important not to use wormers against which there is known resistance in horses. With resistance in horses to fenbendazole¹, mebendazole¹, pyrantel², and ivermectin³ based wormers these should only be used following guidance from your vet.

Summer Worming Tips:

- Remove horse droppings from your pasture at least twice weekly to help reduce the number of worm eggs and larvae on the pasture.
- If possible graze horses alongside sheep or cattle, since worms that affect horses are host specific and therefore any larvae eaten by sheep or cattle are destroyed.
- Harrowing is only advisable in dry hot conditions where exposed worms are killed by the heat. In damp conditions, even if warm, harrowing simply spreads worm eggs and larvae over the pasture and so increasing their chance of being ingested by horses.

1. Fisher MA et al. Veterinary Record (1992) 130: 315-318.
2. Coles GC et al. Veterinary Record (1999) 145: 408.
3. Stoneham S et al. Veterinary Record (2006) 158: 572

