

Strategic Deworming: Making it count!

One of the most important aspects of your equine health program is your deworming protocol. There are as many ideas on how to deworm your horse as there are products on the market. With so many choices let's break it down to the basics and get some ideas that will truly help your horses.

First, let's begin and discuss what parasites live in the horse's digestive tract. In the stomach, bots (*Gastrophilus spp.*) are the most common parasite. The small yellow dots stuck to the hairs on the lower legs of your horse are the eggs of the bot fly. Bots are usually do not cause a problem, but occasionally can cause perforating gastric ulcers. The small intestine is most frequently infected with the Ascarids or round worms (*Parascaris equorum*). These worms are ingested and migrate through the lungs and liver and can cause damage to both organs. Foals with large round worm burdens often break with diarrhea and will show signs of colic. In the large intestine, large strongyles (*Strongylus spp.*) are typically seen. Prior to ivermectin deworming products, many horses would colic and die when these worms would migrate through the blood vessels supplying the large intestine with blood. Finally, the pinworm (*Oxyuris equi*) lives in the rectum of the horse. These worms lay their eggs around the anus of the horse causing a very itchy reaction leading to the horses vigorously rubbing their tails.

Now that we know what types of worms we are trying to target, let's look at some of the products available. The most commonly used products are ivermectin based pastes. These products are great for adults and kill almost of off the parasites listed above. Additionally, the "benzimidazoles" (products such as Panacur, Anthelcide-EQ) are great and are safe for horses of all ages. Lastly, the "daily in-the-feed" dewormers such as "pyrimidines" (Strongid-C) are great products that offer valuable benefits to horses owners in search of a total health care package through the Prevent-A-Care program.

No matter which product you choose, ROTATION is the key! Parasites are very talented at developing resistance to one particular product, so a varying the dewormers used is a must. Deworming protocols vary greatly between horses, depending on their activity level, environment, and previous health problems. A basic parasite control program is to deworm your horse every 60-90 days alternating between an ivermectin and any other product (Panacur, Anthelcide-EQ, Srongid-P). To develop a specific deworming program that works for you and your horse, please do not hesitate to call or stop by.