



# WORM CONTROL



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# Worming Horses

There is no 'one plan fits all' for worming horses and the ideal situation would be to tailor a plan to suit a yard. However this is not always easy, where horses come and go and management varies, so we have put together this guide to an initial plan, as a bare minimum of measures.

## Worm Egg Counts

Worm egg counts are used to look at how many 'roundworm' eggs are in the faeces. This gives a good guide to how many roundworms are infecting the horse's intestines.



Our recommendation is that a sample of each horse's faeces should be submitted to our laboratory 4 times a year during the grazing season (from spring to late autumn/early winter). Samples are examined under the microscope and the number of worm eggs present is counted (**worm egg count: WEC**). This allows us to determine what level of worm burden is present on the yard and which horses are most affected (**20% of horses on a yard are the 'high worm burden horses' carrying 80% of all the worms!**).

As the weather cools in late autumn and during winter, the worms become less active and the horse's risk of infection is reduced until the weather warms up again in spring when the worm lifecycle starts again; so during this period, worm egg counts are not required.

A suitable faecal sample would be about 4 nuggets of fresh dung taken from several different places in the pile and collected into a glove or freezer bag, which can be clearly labelled with the horse's name. Try to exclude as much air as possible and submit the sample to our laboratory the same day. If there is likely to be a delay the sample should be chilled (not frozen) until you can get it to the laboratory.

It is important that the horses are sampled separately rather than pooling samples. This way we can identify which horses are the **high worm burden horses** (the 20% mentioned above, so about 1 in 5 horses).



If worm egg counts are consistently high within a group of horses it may be worth undertaking a **faecal worm egg count reduction test (FWECRT)**, which means performing a further worm egg count 2 weeks after worming to see if the wormer has been effective. If it has not, the worms in those horses, and therefore the paddocks they graze, are probably resistant to that wormer.

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## Which horses need worming, and how much should you give?

Horses with a **high WEC** should be wormed with a product recommended by us. It is important not to 'underdose', as this can encourage resistance to develop, so always try to get an accurate bodyweight for the horse (a weighbridge is ideal but a weigh tape is also effective), and **ADD at least 10%** (to account for errors and losses). For example, if the horse weighs 447kg, add another 45kg (which is 10% rounded up to the nearest kg), so the dose given would be for a 492kg horse ( $447 + 45 = 492$ ).

Horses with a **zero or low WEC** (i.e. below the treatment threshold determined by the laboratory, which will be explained on the results sheet) do not need worming. Healthy adult horses can cope with low levels of worms without being harmed and there is some evidence that low levels may even be beneficial to their health. Leaving worms in the environment that are not exposed to wormers also means that the pressure to develop resistance to wormers is reduced (a concept called 'refugia').

### Underdosing

Always add 10% to your horse's bodyweight when calculating the dose of wormer to give. This is to protect against errors and losses. It is better to overdose slightly than to underdose, which increases the chance of resistance developing,

### Field Management

A critical part of worm control is dung removal from paddocks. Ideally this should be done every day, but at least twice weekly is acceptable so that the larvae that hatch from the eggs in the faeces do not get the opportunity to contaminate the pasture. Keeping the same horses in grazing groups, as far as possible, will also minimise fluctuations in WEC results.



## Tapeworms

### Testing for tapeworms

Tapeworms do not show up reliably in WECs, but you can test for them with a blood sample or a saliva sample. Both of these tests are looking for antibodies against the tapeworms rather than eggs of the tapeworms themselves. This means that care has to be taken when the tests are performed as antibodies can stay in the bloodstream for months after the tapeworms have been killed off after a dewormer has been given to the horse.

The tapeworm lifecycle relies on a pasture mite that spreads the tapeworm across paddocks, and so poo-picking is not always a reliable way of removing the problem. If running these tests is not possible, then it is best to assume that your horse does have tapeworms and therefore treat the horse for them every year.

### When to treat for tapeworms

Historically, treatment for tapeworms has been recommended twice a year in autumn and spring. Weighing up the risks, which may vary from yard to yard, suggests that actually a single treatment in winter, usually around Christmas/New Year is sufficient.

### Which wormer to use

You can buy specific tapeworm dewormers, but treatment at this time of year conveniently can be combined with worming for bots and encysted redworm by giving Equest Pramox. We would advise administering this treatment to every horse, regardless of what is done during the rest of the year.

If you are in any doubt or have a new horse arriving, speak to one of our veterinary surgeons for advice.

# ANNUAL WORMING PACKAGE

**We offer a convenient, cost-effective package, which helps you to protect your horse(s) against internal parasites.**

The aim is to prevent unnecessary treatments by regularly monitoring for worms throughout the grazing season. In winter the package provides a wormer that eliminates all the worm types and stages that may be present when it is colder and the horse(s) are less likely to be picking them up from the pasture.

✓ **Information sheet and a full set of instructions**

✓ **4x Vouchers for worm egg counts at our laboratory**

✓ **4x Bags for collection of faecal samples**

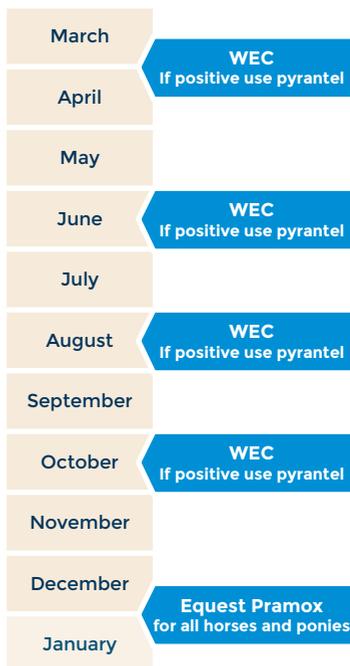
✓ **1x Wormer (Equest Pramox) for use in late winter**

✓ **1x Weigh tape**

✓ **Personalised interpretation of the WEC results and advice about pasture management and deworming treatments, where appropriate.**

The package cost is £60 and is designed to be purchased early in the year, before the first worm egg count in March/April time, to enable you to get most benefit from it.

The package does not include the cost of any dewormers that may be recommended based on an elevated worm egg count during the grazing season, or the cost of any blood or saliva tests for tapeworms.



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**New horses** should be dosed with Equest Pramox immediately before or upon arrival where the worming history is poor or uncertain, regardless of the time of year. Ideally they should be kept stabled or in a separate paddock for a few days while they are passing out any dead/detached worms in their droppings.

**Young and very old horses**, with poorer immunity, are more susceptible to the effect of worms and should be treated separately from the rest of the herd.

**Please contact us for more specific advice about these age groups.**