

Deworming Questions and Answers

Why do we need to change the way we deworm horses?

Parasites are becoming resistant to the commonly used dewormers. As resistance increases, horse's parasite burdens (the number of worms they have) will increase and we will see problems associated with worms. These problems include poor weight gain, poor coats, and COLIC!!

Veterinarians have always told us to deworm every 6-8 weeks...

As veterinarians we learn more about horse's health every year. Now we know that deworming every 6-8 weeks is NOT the best thing to do and that it is time to change our habits. We want to do everything we can to keep our horses healthier longer!!

How do I know my horse's parasite burden?

We need to check stool samples on horses at least twice a year! This means every horse in the barn!! Some horses shed more parasite eggs than others. We need to determine which horses shed a lot of eggs, and which horses are sensitive to which dewormers!!

How do I get my horse's parasite burden checked?

All of the veterinarians at Big Creek can collect stool samples while they are your farm, or if you don't have a farm call scheduled, you can bring fresh samples into the office. We need one ball (not a whole pile) in a bag with the air squeezed out of it! The bag needs to be labeled with your horse's name and your name.

When should I check my horses stool for parasites?

The first time we check for parasites needs to be at least two months after you have dewormed your horse. If we find any parasite eggs in your horse's stool, we need to recheck a stool sample two weeks after you deworm that horse. All horses need to be checked at least twice annually, and your horse may need to be checked more regularly depending on his or her individual parasite load.

Why do some horses have higher parasite burdens than others?

Young horses have not developed any natural immunity to parasites and frequently have high burdens. Older horses and horses that are sick can also have low levels of immunity and high parasite burdens. Horses housed or turned out in large groups or on small pastures frequently have more exposure to parasites and can have high burdens. Some horses have resistance to dewormers or a genetic predisposition to shedding parasites.

***It is very important to remember that even horses that are "low shedders" do still need to be dewormed at least twice annually, and have stool samples analyzed at least twice a year. These horses may have pin worm, or tapeworm infections which are frequently not detected in stool samples. They may also have been exposed to a new source of parasites which will change their individual deworming needs. ***

What can I do to help keep parasites to a minimum in my barn?

Regular manure removal both from stalls and turnout areas is important. Appropriate deworming targeted to each individual horse is also very important.

How soon is the soonest I should deworm after each specific type of dewormer?

One of the reasons we are seeing parasite resistance is that by deworming every 6-8 weeks we are deworming while dewormers are still active in horse's tissues. Benzimidazoles and pyrantel (panacur and strongid) are in the horse's system for 9 weeks, Ivermectin for 12 weeks, and quest for 16 weeks. Horses should NEVER be dewormed until the dewormer is out of their system!!

It is more expensive to do fecal egg counts than it is to buy dewormer at the feed store! It is, but if you are using dewormer that your horse is resistant to, or deworming more frequently than is appropriate for your horse you may be hurting your horse!!

Who should I talk to if I have questions?

There are many good articles in magazines and on the internet about the new methods of deworming, but the most important person for you to talk to if you have questions is your VETERINARIAN!! All of the veterinarians at Big Creek Veterinary Hospital would be happy to discuss your horse's deworming schedule with you! Call us at 440.639.8585!!