



The Latest Guidelines for Deworming Your Horse

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) recently released their recommendations for internal parasite control. These guidelines were necessary because much has changed in the 40 years since dewormers were introduced. Although most of our clients are familiar with the concepts outlined in the guidelines there will be a few “tweaks” in our current Woodside recommendations. Below is a summary of the AAEP guidelines, along with our newest recommendations.

Why We’ve Changed How We Deworm

- The internal parasites that pose the biggest threat to our horses have changed over time. In adult horses, we’re most concerned with cyathostomes, also known as small strongyles. In foals and weanlings, the major parasitic threat is roundworms (*Parascaris Equorum*).
- The old system of deworming every 6-8 weeks has had the unfortunate side effect of allowing parasites to evolve with resistance to multiple types of dewormers. The resistance of parasites needs to be determined for *each farm*, since this differs farm to farm.
- Horses vary in their susceptibility to infection with strongyles as well as the number of strongyle eggs they shed in their manure. In fact, about 20% of adult horses (over the age of 3) carry the majority of the strongyles and shed the majority of the eggs. That means 80% of adult horses, under most conditions, have the innate ability to keep their strongyle infection very low. This means we need to set up deworming programs based on the individual horse.
- Horses under the age of 3 are more susceptible to internal parasites, they also are more likely to suffer health issues because of these parasites. These younger horses need a separate deworming program developed for them based on a farm’s resistance.

So, What are the Goals of a Parasite Control Program on My Farm?

First, it’s important to understand that ridding your horses of all internal parasites is NOT the goal. Eliminating these parasites not only impossible to achieve, but will also hasten the parasites’ becoming resistant to the dewormers that are still effective. Instead our goals should be:

- **Minimize the risk of parasitic disease**
Healthy adult horses do not show signs of disease from low levels of small strongyles. Only young horses and horses that shed a high number of strongyle eggs need to be targeted for more frequent (3-4 X a year) deworming.

- **Reduce the number of parasite eggs that are shed by the horse**

When you submit fecal samples on your horses at the proper times of year (mid-late spring and fall) we can better assist you in deciding which horses need to be treated when.

- **Avoid further resistance**

We achieve this by only deworming the horses that need to be dewormed at the appropriate time of year.

We Already Submit Fecals and Deworm as Recommended, What's New for Us?

Based on these current recommendations, we've decided Woodside should do a few things differently.

- **Collect fecal samples during "prime" grazing seasons**

In our climate, this will be mid-late spring and mid-late fall most years. This is because strongyles will lay the more eggs during these times of year. The parasites don't want to put their eggs on fields where their survival is less likely—when it's too hot or too cold.

- **Monitor resistance at all farms**

We need to verify that our dewormers are still working through constant surveillance. For each type of dewormer, a fecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) should be conducted every three years. We'd be happy to discuss how to implement this on your farm.

Please check out our website at: www.woodsideequineclinc.com for information on preparing fecal samples. We also have our newest deworming protocols listed for adult horses as well as foals, weanlings, and yearlings.