

Worming

- Know your pony's worming history. If you have bought a pony and don't know its previous worming history consider quarantining, faecal worm egg testing and treating for encysted small redworm on arrival before integrating it with others. A blood sample can be taken to guide the need for tapeworm treatment. – Manage your pastures. Remove droppings daily (even twice weekly will be of some help), avoid over stocking and rest pastures sufficiently, bearing in mind that eggs and larvae can survive for several months. All these precautions will help decrease the worm burden and extend the length of time a wormer will work.
- Know the main parasites: small redworm, large redworm, tape worm, pinworm and bots are the most common in adult horses. In foals and weanlings, large roundworm (ascarids) are a concern.
- Target your worming strategy accordingly.
- Test how many eggs are being passed onto the pasture in droppings ('shed') with a Faecal Worm Egg Count (FWEC) to identify a) the pony/ponies which particularly need worming and b) what you are treating.
- Be aware that a FWEC cannot help you identify encysted small redworm, which burrow into the gut wall and can effectively "hibernate" there through the Autumn and Winter before a potentially fatal larval emergence in Spring.
- Similarly, a FWEC will not identify tape worms, which may need a saliva or blood test to identify.
- Treat all horses (over approx. 6 months of age) for encysted small redworm in late Autumn or Winter.
- Use a weight tape or scales to accurately assess your pony's weight and thus accurately calculate dosage. Under dosing can increase the risk of resistance.
- Foals and youngstock require specific worming regimes to ensure resistance.
- Be aware that wormers are prescription medicines and information about them is always changing. Don't be afraid to seek advice to ensure you have the most up to date information.

Based on Dr Wendy Talbot of Zoetis' presentation at the BHS Welfare Conference 2017. For further information see www.horsedialog.co.uk/worming-time-it-right