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Faecal Worm Egg Counts (WEC) & Worming Programme Advice

As many of you are aware, we launched a free WEC scheme and are extremely pleased with the large uptake by clients. The purpose of this is to prevent the over-use of wormers by only worming horses when there is evidence of a worm burden. The heavy use of wormers in the past has led to a significant amount of worm resistance, which means that there is a huge risk that some wormers will become ineffective. Targeted worming of those horses with a significant worm burden will ultimately slow down the development of resistance to our remaining worming drugs and also works out to be more cost-effective than other regular worming plans.

To perform WECs, we ask that you collect a small amount of your horse's manure in a clean, dry, sealable container and drop the sample off at the hospital. The sample should be as fresh as possible, ie. the same day. Should you require large number of samples to be processed, please call us in advance. We do not charge for the service so long as any wormers recommended are purchased through our practice. Our vets will contact you with results, either by phone or email, to discuss the appropriate treatment.

Questions & Answers

Why is it recommended to worm horses with low worm egg counts in the New Year?

WECs do not detect the presence of large burdens of small red worms that may hibernate in the gut wall over winter. Mass emergence of larvae from the gut wall in late winter/early spring may cause life-threatening diarrhoea. As a consequence, any targeted strategic worming programme relying solely on WECs should include a treatment for encysted small red worms in the winter to make sure that your horse is not at risk from these worms.

Which products are licensed for treating encysted red worms?

Equest (Moxidectin) and 5 day Panacur Equine Guard. We would also encourage you to alternate use of both products, rather than just use the simpler one-off dose of Equest.

Do WECs detect tapeworms?

No - tapeworm eggs are not detected by routine WECs and we recommend using a blood test to assess tapeworm burden.

WECs & worming drugs are important; what else do I need to know?

It is very important to prevent pasture contamination - regular removal of manure from the field is the most effective way to control parasites. If you require more detailed advice or wish to discuss your programme please call and speak to one of the vets directly.
