

North Star Veterinary Services Newsletter

October 2019

When should you de-worm your horse?

For many years horse owners and veterinarians have been utilizing a de-worming method in which you de-worm your horse every other month with rotating products. This method can be effective for certain horses on certain farms, but because of the rising incidence of parasite resistance to de-worming medications, there is a growing concern for these traditional methods of de-worming. Not only are they potentially unnecessary to control parasite populations in your horse, but they are contributing to increased populations of resistant parasites. This should be a serious concern for all horse owners, because there are only a limited number of de-worming medications available. If parasites continue to become more and more resistant, there will be no effective medications left to control them. To combat parasite resistance we now recommend utilizing a *selective de-worming* program which we will outline in this newsletter.

What is parasite resistance?

Parasite resistance is when parasites develop the genetic ability to survive treatment with a certain antiparasitic drug that they were previously susceptible to. Once they do this they pass on that ability to the next generation of parasites, resulting in populations of parasites that are unaffected by the de-worming medications available. It is therefore important to maintain a population of parasites in an environment that are susceptible to medications (that medications will work on). This population can then dilute out the resistant parasite populations and slow the development of a completely resistant population on a farm.

How do you utilize selective de-worming?

In order to preserve susceptible parasites on your farm that de-wormers will be effective against, it is important to only de-worm animals when it is absolutely necessary. In other words, you need to be selective of who and when you are de-worming. The best way to do this is through fecal egg counts (fecal tests). These simple tests look at the number of parasite eggs being shed in your horses' manure in order to determine whether or not they are shedding large amounts or small amounts of parasite eggs. Those animals that are shedding high amount of eggs are ones that should be de-wormed, while those animals with small amounts of eggs are ones that can be de-wormed less frequently in order to maintain a small population of parasites that will continue to be susceptible to de-wormers. Fecal tests can also be used to determine whether or not there is a problem with de-wormer resistance on your farm. By running a fecal before and after de-worming you can see whether or not it was effective at reducing the number of parasite eggs your horse was shedding.

When contacting North Star call 518-483-6223

North Star Veterinary Services Newsletter

Getting started

To get started using a selective worming program, we recommend running fecal tests on all your horses 1-2 times/year, ideally in the spring and fall before de-worming. Fecal tests are \$25/horse plus a small processing fee. Besides the important benefit of decreasing parasite resistance, testing can sometimes even reduce overall cost of de-worming on your farm since you will not need to be buying de-wormer every other month for every horse.

To have the test run, simply drop a fresh manure sample off in a plastic Ziploc bag to the clinic during normal business hours. We usually have results in 1-2 business days. We will help you interpret the results and decide what to do. If we determine your horse is a “low shedder”, we will recommend only twice a year de-worming. If we determine your horse is a “high shedder”, we will recommend more frequent fecal tests and de-worming. It is important to make sure all horses on your farm, even the low shedders, are being de-wormed at least once a year with a product containing “praziquantel” (often a “gold” or “plus” product), because these are the only products that work against tape worms.

If you have any questions or would like to get started with a selective de-worming program, call us today. We are more than happy to get you started!



North Star Veterinary Services is now on Facebook! Please give us a “like” for practice updates, patient stories, and client education. www.facebook.com/NorthStarVetServices

When contacting North Star call 518-483-6223