

# Lovell Equine Newsletter



American  
Association  
of Equine  
Practitioners

LOVELL EQUINE CLINIC

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## A New Look at Deworming

Do you ever feel as if you need a degree in equine sciences to be able to deworm your horse? Look at any number of magazines with articles on parasite control and you will encounter descriptions of up to ten of the most common types of parasites (out of 150 species), along with a frightening picture of each organism. There will be lists of signs of parasitism as well as possible devastating internal damage that you might not be aware of until the damage is done. There are many classes and types of dewormers as well as methods for administering them. Rotation schedules might vary from geographic region to region or opinion to opinion. The horse's age, health, number of horses on the property and size of the property are also factors. This can become so confusing that you may be ready to wave the white flag. Wouldn't it be great if you have a deworming program designed just for your farm?

Let's start with the facts. Where can you get information that is unbiased and sure to be the most updated and accurate? One place is through the American Association of Equine Practitioners. Go to [www.aaep.org](http://www.aaep.org). It is a great resource for any health questions you might have about your horse. The Horse magazine is also another reliable source or [www.horse.com](http://www.horse.com). Your veterinarian is another source. Catalogs and retail stores are ill-equipped to deal with all of the variables that need to be considered for each individual farm's program.

Secondly, let's begin by looking at why a deworming program is second in importance only to supplying your horse with clean, plentiful water and high quality grain. External signs of parasitism can include dull or rough hair coat, decreased energy or depression, unthriftiness or loss of condition, slowed growth in young horses, pot belly, colic, and diarrhea. The

real problems with parasites are that outside of these symptoms they are silent thieves and killers. Horses can have a potentially dangerous number of internal parasites while appearing relatively healthy. Parasites can lower a horse's resistance to infection and rob the horse of valuable nutrients and cause permanent damage to internal organs. Besides the damage caused by these parasites, your horse will be unable to properly use those important nutrients in the feeds that you purchase, regardless of the quality of the feed.

Lastly, let's review how parasite control programs were viewed in the last 30-40 years. There are five parasites out of the one hundred fifty that are the most important in terms of your horse's health: large strongyles, small strongyles, roundworms, bots, and tapeworms. Dewormers have ingredients that combat each of these types of parasites. Some are called broad-spectrum and can treat several types at once. Your program can be a daily one, where dewormer that is in pellet form is given along with grain each day. Interval deworming involves using dewormers on a rotation basis to tackle each type at a different time.

Studies are starting to come out that view a deworming program in a different light. There is some concern that when the same or a chemically similar product is used repeatedly for years, the product becomes less effective. Rotating too often can create strains of parasites that are resistant to multiple products. Most dewormers are more effective on parasites that are in the adult stage of their life cycles. It is actually the prevention of egg shedding that does the most for the horse health and overall worm control. Strategies for decelerating drug resistance, which will extend the lifetime of the dewormer, should be used whenever possible. To achieve this goal you need to treat the right horse with the right drug at the right time.

**When do I bring in a fecal Egg Count?**  
50-60 days post deworming with Pyrantel/Anthelcide/Panacure  
70 days post deworming Ivermectin  
90 days post Quest  
If you haven't dewormed in 2-3 months it's ok to have it checked. Just let us know when and what you last dewormed with.

Where do you start? The best place is with a fecal egg count. This is a fecal sample that is examined microscopically, from fresh manure, to look for parasite eggs. It allows the veterinarian to determine which parasites are present and if the infection is light, moderate or heavy. This tells you which parasite to treat instead of just guessing. It can also tell you if your horse is a chronic shedder, which may mean that while the horse shows no sign of parasitism, it is carrying a lot of adult worms that are laying lots of eggs, spreading them all over your pasture to the other horses. This horse may need to be dewormed more often. While horses, being grazers, will never be parasite free, this test will let you know what parasite to treat and how often.

It is recommended that a fecal egg count be done just before time to deworm your horse. A second one should be done 10-14 days after this first deworming. This is called a fecal egg count reduction test. This tells you if the dewormer worked. With scientists discovering more and more resistance to commonly used dewormers, it's important to be sure that there are fewer eggs in your horse's manure AFTER deworming. You owe it to your horse's health and to your budget to be sure that you aren't just going through the motions.

If you are interested in setting up a deworming program at your farm, call us at 615-452-7789. We will be happy to assist you in any way that we can.