

## **Worming...How much is too much?** by Marcia Tipsword

There's been some recent chatter of horse owner's worming too much. According to the Saddle Up Magazine (Sept. 2009) on worming, it sounds like anything **over two** strategic, wormings is **too much**. They say the wormers are losing the battle, and we are now causing "resistance issues" for our four legged buddies. Isn't that the way with everything?...too much of a good thing is bad. Makes sense. It was an interesting read, so I'll give you the shorter version, as it pertains to the northern region. Sounds simple. You decide.



**BLOOD WORMS**

A seasonal approach to worming is more effective than routine intervals, according to Craig Reinemeyer, DVM, PhD, President of East Tennessee Clinical Research, Inc. He states that the move is currently away from old deworming programs that we use to follow. When using wormers, you have to consider climatic conditions, Northern vs. Southern and confinement vs. pasture. Late winter, many of the northern horses are confined in stalls and turned out during the day. In winter, there's not a lot going on, but start thinking of your worming program for **April /May** when we let the horses out to graze. Look at the whole annual worming program as a continuing cycle throughout the year, so you **should have wormed in the late fall/early winter** preferably with a dewormer that **included tapeworm killer** (Quest Plus, Equimax or Zimectrin Gold because they contain praziquatal to kill tapeworms and eradicate large strongyles, says the vet.) **Fall** is the traditional time we treat for **bots, after the first hard frost**. All the flies are gone, and not a new egg in site on our well groomed horses. The Tennessee vet, believes you get the **most bang for your buck, late fall/early winter**. Note that if a horse is infested with bot eggs, they can continue to infect themselves throughout the winter, so you would have use a wormer.

*Pasture parasites are always on the lowest part of the plant near the ground, so the closer a pasture is grazed the more worms will be ingested.*

**In the Spring**, the northern adult horses are being turned out on pasture, and should be wormed four to five days before they are turned out. (The foals and young stock have their own set of rules for worming.) This is minimum parasite control for **adult** horses to maintain eradication of large strongyles (*S. vulgaris*). Treat with a larvicidal drug every six months, and keep that schedule. The following products will work for the six month interval...ivermectins, moxidectin (Quest or Quest Plus), and Panacure Power-Pak. Spring and late fall are the best times for these wormers and the emphasis is to **worm five days before** turning the horses out to munch on **spring pastures**.

**My two cents:** Don't forget there is nothing stopping you from calling the vet and bringing a small fecal sample to the clinic. Own several horses? Then choose one horse from your private barn as a representative. The fecal exam fee is usually reasonable, and your baby is worth it.

Bloodworms, are considered the most damaging internal parasite of horses according to the Saddle Up article. Ivermectin arrived on the scene in the early 80's and has made bloodworms a rare event. But studies show that using the drugs too often has brought resistance issues with these parasites. Denmark, where strongyle infections are now on the rise, have fallen to a "no sale" for over-the-counter wormers. Now, a vet has to examine the horse. Even the vet cannot use a dewormer on a horse without a specific diagnosis. This procedure has their wormers remaining more effective for a longer time, with less resistance issues. Denmark's horses are dewormed considerably less now, and on the negative side, as a result, are seeing the once rare, older worm infections making a comeback.