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# Intestinal Parasite Control in Horses

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## Indications That Your Horse May Need to be Dewormed

- Your horse has not been dewormed in over three months
- Your horse is a foal
- Your horse shares a pasture with other horses
- Your horse is not gaining weight or is losing weight
- Your horse has an unthrifty body condition
- You see worms or worm segments in your horse's feces

## Diagnosis

The best way to know what type of parasites and how many your horse has is to get a fecal analysis done. This test tells us what types and how many parasites are present. We use this information to decide if it is necessary to treat your horse, what the best type of dewormer for your horse is, and how frequently they need to get it. Small numbers of certain types of parasites are normal, or acceptable whereas high numbers or certain other kinds of parasites need to be treated. This test is also useful after your horse has been treated to assess efficacy of treatment and alert us to any treatment resistant parasites. Routine fecal exams are the most accurate way to plan your horses deworming schedule.

## Treatment

Depending on the numbers and types of parasites involved, your horse will likely be treated with one of several types of oral deworming medications.

## Management of Parasites

It is just as important, if not more so, to manage your horse's environment to prevent parasites than medical treatment itself. Most intestinal parasites of horses complete their life cycle by being expelled in the feces and then eaten by the same or another horse. Thus, the best way to decrease a horse's parasite load is to keep feces in stalls and pastures to a minimum. We recommend that stall feces be removed daily and pasture fecal piles be picked up twice weekly. Also, feeding from a manger or hay net will keep your horses from eating where they defecate.

## Take Home Message

Routine fecal analysis for parasites, followed by appropriate deworming medication when necessary, and farm management techniques are the best ways to keep your horse free of parasites. By implementing these rational steps we can appropriately diagnose the parasites that need to be treated, avoid using deworming medication when it isn't necessary and help prevent drug resistant parasites.