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# *Kilshannagh Veterinary Clinic*

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3051 State Rte. 82 Ancramdale, NY 12503  
Tel. 518. 329.5213 Fax 518.329.0026  
[www.kvclinic.com](http://www.kvclinic.com)

## **EQUINE INTESTINAL PARASITE CONTROL**

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

#### 1) DEWORMERS.

Traditionally, deworming strategies for our horses has revolved around the thought that “one-size-fits-all”. The typical approaches have been either to employ a daily dewormer (e.g. pyrantel pellets), or paste dewormers on a fixed schedule. The latter is done in a “slow rotation” or “fast rotation”. Slow rotation refers to changing dewormer on an annual basis, fast rotation to changing dewormer types more frequently. Rotation of any kind is used in an attempt to slow the development of resistance to the deworming product. Consensus has developed that the slow rotation programs are in fact superior to the fast rotation programs frequently used. Regardless of which of the above strategies is employed, **AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF AN IVERMECTIN/PRAZIQUANTEL DEWORMER SHOULD BE GIVEN ANNUALLY**, ideally late Winter or early Spring. Additionally one annual 5 consecutive day deworming with double-dose fenbendazole remains a very effective way of controlling the increasingly prevalent small strongyles (“cyathostomes”).

#### 2) OTHER MEASURES.

- manure pick-up in paddocks.
- harrowing of paddocks and subsequent resting of paddock for 30 days if possible.
- immediate deworming of any new arrivals to the barn and 48 hr “quarantine”.
- more frequent worming of youngstock (less than 2 years old).
- general attention to stall hygiene.

The traditional approach has the great advantages of simplicity and convenience at reasonable cost. However, concern about the regular occurrence of resistance to many dewormers and the

discomfort that many in the equine world have about repeated frequent administration of internally absorbed chemicals to our horses, with little clear idea of what insidious side-effects there may be, has led many horse owners in recent years to question this traditional approach. A valid alternative method is to base deworming on regular fecal testing (“fecal egg counts” or “feces”).

## DEWORMING BASED ON FECAL EGG COUNTS.

This strategy attempts to base deworming on the actual prevalence of parasites in a given situation, recognizes that horses vary in their susceptibility to parasite infection dependent on age, health and immune status, and helps us to select wormers that are demonstrably effective in a given farm situation.

It involves examining the manure for the presence of parasite eggs that are generally reflective of the adult worm populations. (NB – tape worm eggs and small strongyle eggs are often hard to detect hence the preceding recommendations regarding annual usage of an ivermectin/praziquantel wormer and fenbendazole).

To begin, sample all horses just before their next scheduled deworming. If counts are low or negative, do not worm. Those that require deworming should be rechecked 2 weeks after that dose to ensure that the dewormer is in fact adequately effective. Your sampling veterinarian will use the values from each egg count to calculate the % effectiveness of the dewormer.

Periodically (typically every 3 months initially) recheck all horses. As time passes a pattern will usually emerge showing us those individuals that need more frequent worming, and those that need very little. More often than not, much less deworming is practiced than with the traditional approaches.

Additionally, any new horse arriving on the premises should be wormed on arrival with ivermectin/praziquantel product, denied access to paddocks for 24-48hrs, followed immediately by 5-day fenbendazole and then wormed again with ivermectin/praziquantel 6 weeks later before entering the testing program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS.

Whilst we as a practice are very keen on the fecal egg count approach, we realize that for convenience this may not suit everyone. Of the more traditional protocols, we currently are most satisfied with use of a low dose daily wormer.