

Understanding Worms

Parasitic worms in horses generally live in the horse's bowel, surrounded by food that passes through the horse's digestive tract. The worms often attach themselves to the bowel and this prevents it from being removed with food and water.

When horses are restricted to a small grazing area continuously, the number of worms can cause serious problems and even be fatal for the horse.

Adult worms in the horse's stomach can release eggs, these pass out onto pasture via horse droppings. The droppings break down, and the worm larvae hatch and climb up the grass stalks. Another horse can eat the grass with the larvae and once inside the eggs hatch, develop into adults and the cycle continues.

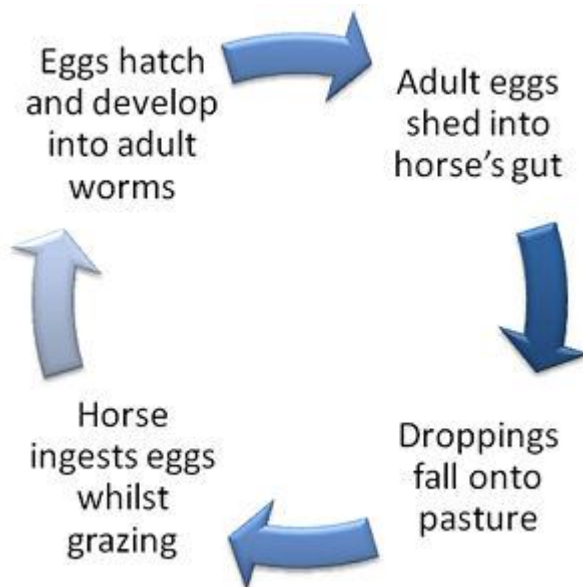


Figure 1: A simplified diagram of the life cycle of the worm
(Liverpool)

The most effective way of reducing the spread of contamination is a combination of three factors:

1. Use of anthelmintics – The majority of horse wormers are avermectin ('mectin') based or benzimidazole ('azole') based. You must rotate from a 'mectin' to an 'azole' or vice-versa. This is called rotation, and it means using a product from one class of active ingredients for the entire year and then switching to a different class of active the next year. If you adopt the correct working program you should slow the emergence of resistance.

Generally horses on studs or agistment properties should be wormed every six to eight weeks. All horses should be wormed at least every 3 months regardless of the conditions in which they are kept.

2. Good pasture management - The easiest way to implement this strategy in horses is to prevent horses having contact with contaminated pasture or feed.

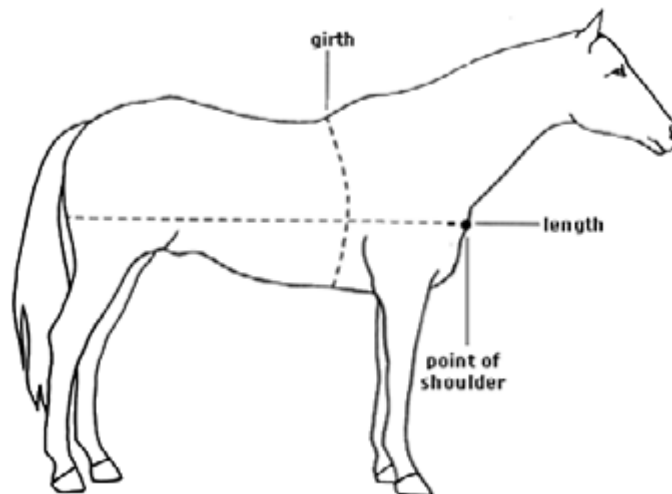
3. Monitoring of parasite transmission – here you may undertake a faecal egg count

How much drench to give?

A far more accurate tool to obtaining the true weight of your horse is to use a calculation based on the dimensions of the horse. The New South Wales Department of Agriculture developed the following formula, which is generally proven to be very accurate – but can be out by up to 50Kg in extreme cases.

Weight in kgs = (Weight (kg) = [girth (cm²) × length (cm)] ÷ 11 000

Weight in kilograms = equals the girth in centimetres squared (that is, multiplied by itself), then multiplied by the length of the horse (in centimetres) from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock. This number is then divided by 11,000 to give the final result.



(Industries, 2007)

Weight Tape

Weight tapes are readily available in most tack and feed shops. The weight is determined by wrapping the tape around the heart girth of the horse, (as per image above), overlapping the ends of the tape, and reading the resultant weight in the table below.

Girth Length (cm)	76	102	116	128	140	148	156	164	171	178	185	192	197
Weight (kg)	45.5	91	136.5	182	227	273	318	364	409	455	500	545	591

Table 2: Approximate guide to weights of horses by type and size

<i>Type</i>	Height at withers		Weight (kg)
	(hands)	(cm)	
Shetland	8–10	81–102	200–225
Pony (small, saddle)	10–12	102–122	225–350
Pony (large)	13–14	132–142	250–360
Galloway	14–15	142–152	275–400
Lightweight hack	15–16	152–163	350–500
Heavyweight hack	16–17	163–173	450–600
Draught	16–18	163–183	550–800

(Industries, 2007)

Bibliography

Industries, N. D. (2007, February). *Estimating a horse's weight*. Retrieved September 1, 2011, from Estimating a horse's weight: http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/109988/estimating-a-horses-weight.pdf

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