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Parasite

PREVENTION OR CONTROL

by Jessica Lynn

Chemical vs. Herbal



Round worm – Occasionally, worms might be seen in manure.

Allopathic veterinarians and most of the horse health books today say it is essential to “chemically” worm your horse either monthly or no less than each quarter; none seem to suggest that horse care takers do fecal counts first to determine “if” their horse actually needs a chemical wormer.

Equine parasite management has changed over the years. It used to be that the vet would come out annually, tube the horse giving a dose of the liquid wormer used mostly for cattle, and that would be that, carrying with it some risk from tubing. Fifty years ago that was the only option available. Then things started to change, and by the mid-1970’s we were able to chemically worm our own horses with paste wormers. In the 1980’s ivermectin was introduced and it killed not only the adult parasites but the larva as well.

Many of the chemical wormers on the market now for home use only work on one type of parasite, most work only on the adult and not on the larva or the eggs, so now the chemical companies suggest that you use a different product each time you chemically worm, but unless you read the label you would not realize that many contain the same ingredients just sold under different names, labels, and brands. Changing the name or the brand is not changing the effective ingredient thus causing the parasites to become “drug immune” or “resistant” to current worming practices.

These chemicals get in to our environment through horse urine and manure and birds who pick through the manure or even our pets, especially our dogs, may be at risk from eating contaminated manure (there have been cases of dog’s dying from being poisoned). These chemicals can pollute our drinking water by finding their way in to rivers, streams, and wells. If I have to chemically worm my horses, which is rare, I pick up the manure 2-3 times a day for two days after, put it in a trash bag, and transport it to the dump, as I do not want to poison birds or my pets, nor contaminate my well. When I do have to use a chemical I use it on the sixth night after five nights of an herbal wormer which has already stirred up the parasites. This will finish them off. I typically use ivermectin.



Rotate horses in pastures if possible, allowing other types of animals to graze.

There are also side effects to the horse from the over use of chemical wormers including laminitis, a compromised immune system, allergic skin reactions, damage to the horse’s intestinal health, and colic.

PREVENTION

There are five major forms of intestinal parasites found in horses: pin worms, bots, ascarids, along with the large and small strongyles; most, if

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not all, of these are passed between horses by eggs of the parasites being passed in manure—horses will either graze or play near droppings that have not been picked up and can ingest the eggs; even if they roll in an area, once they have ingested the eggs it starts the cycle, passing them along from horse to horse. Some veterinarians now feel that tape worm may also be an issue for horses.

Keeping pastures, pens, and all areas picked up on a regular basis will greatly reduce your horse's chance of contracting parasites. If you are bringing in a new horse, do a fecal egg count test and keep them quarantined until they are "parasite free" (or at a level that would be considered acceptable or not shedding, as all horses will have some parasites and that is part of the digestive process) using either herbal or chemical wormers or a combination of both, disposing of their manure off site.

Herbs are an alternative approach, especially if given during a full moon cycle when parasites are most active; I'm unaware of any evidence that parasites become resistant to herbal blends or herbs. My horses have gone as long as three years without needing a chemical wormer while receiving an herbal blend monthly from early spring through the first hard frost; they are also in a closed herd these days which helps. The only times that they have had parasites is when I have had to be in a boarding situation, which is where they picked up round worms. My rescue mini, Annie Rose, had not been properly cared for and had to have the PowerPac® twice because, after one dose of ivermectin, more worms were coming out of her than manure, and it was a daily science experiment as I picked up her manure with all sorts of worms of varying sizes, shapes, and colors for two weeks! Since then, she has been on the herbal wormer and has remained parasite free!

Good preventative management practices should also include the following:

- If possible, rotate animals between pastures, allowing other grazing animals such as goats, sheep, llamas, or other farm animals to graze them, thereby interrupting the life cycle of the parasites.
- Maintain a flock of free-range chickens to assist with parasite, egg, and fly larva control, and have the added bonus of natural eggs!
- Group horses by age to reduce exposure to certain parasites and maximize the de-worming programs for susceptible animals, i.e. foals, weanlings, and yearlings.
- Keep the number of horses per acre to a minimum to prevent overgrazing and fecal contamination of the pasture.
- Use a large ground feeder or hanging nets for hay rather than feeding on the ground.
- Remove bot eggs quickly and regularly from the horse's hair coat and use a good natural fly spray to repel flies.

THE POWER OF NATURE

There are a variety of seeds and herbs that when blended together and given for five days monthly, preferably during a full moon cycle, will not only help to expel any parasites the horse may have picked up, but will also assist in destroying most parasites. I have also found that if you feed a concentrated garlic in either powder or granules, daily, beginning in early spring it is not only anti-parasitic but can also help repel flying insects; it does not have to be more than a rounded tablespoon daily. There are also natural products containing both garlic and powdered apple cider vinegar that work well together inside and out.

There are a number of "anathematic herbs" which fall into different categories; some herbs may have several classes of action in the body and some have a combination of the following properties:

Vermicides – Kill worms in the gut or elsewhere.

Vermifuges – Expel the dead worms and any associated debris from the body. The difference between expelling and actually killing the parasites can depend on the herb used, dosage given, and how often it is administered. **Anathematic** herbs can be very toxic in nature and should not be randomly used nor fed to any animal or person unless properly mixed and prepared by a qualified herbalist or holistic veterinarian.

Some of the vermicide and vermifuge type herbs are:

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WORMWOOD:

Is one of the most bitter herbs and is best used as part of a natural worming mixture. It is used not only against threadworms but also round worms. Wormwood is an excellent anthelmintic and also an effective tonic for the whole digestive system, so only a small amount of this herb is needed blended with other anti-parasitic herbs.

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FENNEL SEED:

Is a liver herb that works to help balance horses with either poor or voracious appetites. It is historically used as part of an herbal worming mixture, as some parasites are known to reside in the liver.

CAYENNE:

Helps to set up a hostile environment for parasites.

PUMPKIN SEEDS:

Are noted for expelling tapeworms from the body. Pumpkin seeds are rich in nutrients that can assist in removing large quantities of uric acid in the urine. They also contain the amino acid cucurbitin, which gives these seeds their anthelmintic actions.

GARLIC:

Garlic is a natural antibiotic. It is anti-microbial, anti-parasitic, anti-fungal, and anti-bacterial. Garlic is useful against round worms, tap worms, pinworms, and hookworms.



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RED CLOVER:

Red clover is high in copper and cobalt and is considered to be anti-fungal, anti-viral, and may have anti-parasitic properties. It has been shown to be effective against red-worms, also known as bloodworms or large strongyles.

IN CONCLUSION:

Perform fecal exams, preferably quantitative, 3-4 times per year on all horses to determine parasite loads. Chemically worm only if there is an indication of very high egg counts.

Use herbal wormers (or your own blend of herbs) in place of chemical wormers to keep infestations low naturally.

Keep pastures and turn out areas picked up. Boost your horse's immune system, the horse's immune system holds the key to his body's health; it protects him against viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites, etc. It is a miraculous and complex network of organs that contain cells that recognize and destroy foreign invaders. These cells are nourished by nutrients he is able to absorb from his feedstuffs. Good nutrition is key to keeping your horse parasite free! ♡♡

About the author:

Jessica Lynn, over the past 15 years, has written more than 25 articles for various national and international horse publications on horse health. She is a contributor on NBC Sports Radio FM Horse Talk in Ocala, FL with Louisa Barton. Jessica is the owner of Earth Song Ranch, an Equine Nutritionist, a feed and supplement manufacturer based in Southern California, and a distributor for Horse Tech and Mushroom Matrix Products. Jessica has been involved in alternative health care, herbs, homeopathy, and nutrition for animals and humans for almost five decades. Contact Jessica via e-mail at Jessica@earthsongranch.com or phone 951-514-9700. Her web site is: www.earthsongranch.com



Fennel seeds



Cayenne



Pumpkin seeds



Red clover