



The George & Belmont House Equine Clinics Worming Survey 2011



I thought a Christmas mailing was too good an opportunity to miss to update you about the worm survey we carried out in 2011. The results certainly make you think and whilst I am aware that a targeted approach won't work for every horse, or owner, it does work for most of us if we change our mind set. It really matters that we have effective wormers for our horses both now and in the future. Please consider a test and only worm if needed approach. We are happy to email you a reminder when your next worm egg count is due. Just contact us either by phone or email to register for the reminders. I will phone with the test result and advise if worming is needed and with which wormer as appropriate. This is very hassle free - how about giving it a go?

Why did we want to do the Survey?

To change horse owners attitude to worming. We want owners to look at moving away from a blanket approach, where horses are wormed at set intervals whether needed or not, to a targeted approach of test and only worm if positive.

Why does it matter?

Our current approach to worming horses in the UK is contributing to the development of resistance to wormers and thus reducing their efficacy. There are no new worming chemicals or anthelmintics in development. If we don't look after what we have, there will not be effective wormers in the future.

Do all adult horses need worm control?

An emphatic YES on this one BUT worm control does not just mean dosing your horse with wormers.

What did we do?

We decided to do something useful and practical to show our horse owners how easy it is to change their approach to worming without compromising the health of their horses. Having spoken to many owners, the idea of collecting fresh dung samples and submitting them to a lab just seems too much hassle. It is easier to buy a wormer of some sort when out and about, worm the horse and feel content that a good job has been done. Couple this with underdosing, as not many owners use a weigh tape to guesstimate their horse's bodyweight, and we have all the conditions to actually promote resistance to wormers.

Therefore, we recruited 509 adult (4yrs and over) horses to do a survey where we would come out, weigh tape the horses, collect fresh dung samples, take them to the lab for testing, phone you with the results and advise on the correct course of action for worm control.

Worm Egg Count (WEC) 0-199 eggs per gram (epg) = No wormer needed.

WEC 200 epg or greater = wormer given based on weightape measurement as minimum dose.

Any horses wormed were tested two weeks later to check the wormer had worked. All horses were tested again either three months after a negative first test or three months after a wormer had been given after a positive first test. The survey started in March 2011.

Results.

Of the horses tested initially, all were regarded by their owners as due for worming. 509 horses were tested. 64(13%) had a WEC of 200epg or greater and were





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wormed with Equest. All except one of these 64 were negative for worm eggs when tested again two weeks later.

- 82 horses were positive on their second WEC three months after the first.
- 75% of the horses tested were negative for worm eggs on both tests three months apart.
- 2% of the horses were positive on both tests.
- 13% of horses that were negative on the first test were positive on the second test.
- In a situation where over 1000 doses of wormer would have been given, usage was reduced to 146 doses. An 86% reduction in the use of chemical wormers without any detriment to horse health.



The horses that were positive on both tests could be regarded as persistent high egg shedders and these individual horses can reasonably be given regular wormers once identified.

Comments from Owners who took part.

"Once I got my head round collecting samples it was easy to organise"

"Take away plastic tubs worked well for storage of bagged samples!"

"I used a small cool box to keep samples in so there was no rush to get them to the lab"



Sample collection and handling.

For reliable results, samples should be fresh (less than 12 hours out of the horse) collected into ideally a plastic bag from which excess air is removed. A single faecal ball from the middle of a pile of faeces is plenty! Faecal samples kept cool will not deteriorate. At warmer temperatures, worm eggs in a sample will hatch out and thus not be recorded when examined. Either drop samples straight into us at any one of our four premises where they will be fridged straight away ensuring no deterioration in the sample. Alternatively place the sample in a small cool box with an ice block until you can drop the sample in. Good quality samples which are well processed provide good quality results. A simple sandwich bag labelled with you and your horse's name is ideal for collecting samples.



Encysted larvae and tape worm.

Faecal worm egg counts do not check for tapeworm burden and there is no test in life for the encysted larvae which burrow into the horse's gut wall and over winter. Thus all horses should be given a tape wormer and larvicidal wormer in November each year even if all their WEC's through the rest of the year have been negative. Equest Pramox is suitable for this job in adult horses.

Youngstock were not included in this survey as they should all be wormed routinely. This approach and advice is suitable for four year olds and upwards.

Everyone at the clinic, vets, office and laboratory staff put in a lot of time, effort and enthusiasm into completing this survey and collating the results. We all hope it will be a benefit to long term horse health.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2012.

Linda Belton BVSc MRCVS

