

Equine deworming is a critical part of overall equine wellness. It's also a rather *technical* part of your donkey's wellness program. With this in mind, by working with our veterinarians and founders, Drs. Arnold Nagely and Ray Shultz, we bring you a comprehensive Q&A about all things equine deworming.

**Q: What risks do parasites present to equines?**

Parasites rob equines of nutrition, energy and overall wellness. When left untreated, parasites can cause critical damage to an equine's vital organs, impair their growth, hinder their performance and even cause colic.

**Q: When is the best time to deworm my equine?**

American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) [parasite control guidelines](#) recommend deworming when parasite levels can be at their highest, during the spring and fall. Treatment for bots and tapeworms should be timed to coincide with the end of the fly season for bots and the end of pasture season for tapeworms, typically late fall or early winter. For best control, look to [ivermectin/praziquantel](#) or [moxidectin/praziquantel](#) deworming combinations.

While deworming helps alleviate adult worms, in turn reducing the number of eggs shed, it is important to keep in mind that the real damage done by strongyles occur during larval migration. Consider treating with [Panacur PowerPac](#) when the encysted stage is at its peak, typically in the fall for northern climates and spring in more tropical and subtropical climates.

**Q: How often should adult equines be dewormed?**

Work with your veterinarian to perform a fecal egg count (FEC) test, which will help guide you on the frequency of deworming treatments needed. The [AAEP recommends](#) one FEC per year for adult equines. As a general best practice, though, equines should be treated once or twice yearly, during spring and fall.

**Q: According to an equine's FEC results, what constitutes as a low or high parasite shedder?**

**Understanding an equine's FEC Test Result Numbers and Level of Parasite Risk**

Low shedder

0 to 100 eggs per gram (EPG)

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Moderate shedder

<200 to 500 EPG

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High shedder

600 to 3,000 EPG

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**Q: Which parasites should equines be treated against?**

There are more than 150 species of internal parasites that can infect equines. The following are the most common, with the first three posing the gravest risk to your equine's health.

- Small strongyles (cyathostomins)
- Roundworms (ascarids)
- Tapeworms
- Large strongyles (bloodworms or redworms)
- Pinworms
- Bots
- Threadworms

### **Q: Do younger equines have unique deworming needs?**

Foals should be dewormed a minimum of four times, beginning at 2 to 3 months of age. Because ascarids are the primary target, [benzimidazole dewormers](#) are recommended. A second dose of benzimidazole is recommended by 6 months of age, at which time an FEC can be used to determine whether the primary worm burden is ascarids or strongyles. The next two de-wormings, at 9 and 12 months of age, should primarily target strongyles, with tapeworm treatment included in one of the treatments.

Recently weaned foals should be turned out to the cleanest pastures available with the lowest parasite burdens. Yearlings and 2 year olds should be [treated as high shedders](#), according to their FEC results, and be dewormed on average three times per year.

FACT: 80% of eggs are often shed by only 20 to 30% of equines.

### **Q: Do high-shedding equines have different deworming needs?**

Some 80% of eggs are often shed by only 20 to 30% of horses. The key is to identify high-shedders and deworm before they begin passing large numbers of eggs into the environment.

To help control parasite burden for high shedders (more than 600 EPG), consider incorporating a daily dose of [Strongid® C 2X](#) to help break the cycle of parasite infection.

### **Q: Can certain factors contribute to increased parasite levels at a barn?**

Yes! A number of elements can contribute to higher levels of parasite shedding, such as:

- Boarding and training barns, which house greater numbers of equines that may contribute to increased parasite burden
- Movement of equines on and off the farm for training or competitions, presenting greater contact with other equines
- Foals, weanlings and geriatric equines, which are often higher shedders of eggs
- High stocking densities (more than two equines per acre) and nonrotated pastures, which are proven to increase parasite levels

**Q: Should an equine's approximate weight be determined before dosing de-wormers?**

Yes! It's important to dose to your equine's individual weight when deworming. Keep a handy [weight tape](#) in your tack box to help accurately dose your equine's de-wormer, and remember these four simple steps to using a [weight tape](#).

Make sure your equine is standing square.

1. Place the weight tape around your equine's heart girth.
2. For the closest weight approximation, see the number where the tape meets.
3. Set your de-wormer to the correct weight to administer an accurate dose.



**Q: What are best practices to incorporate for parasite control, in addition to worming?**

To better manage parasites, it is recommended that equines consume grain and hay from a [feeder or hay rack](#) that is elevated off the ground. Removing manure daily, as well as composting manure and clipping pastures, also can help control parasite populations. To help eliminate larvae, pasture rotation also is a best practice. If possible, horse owners can remove horses from the pasture and rotate in another species, such as cattle, to help eliminate parasite burden from the field.