**Red Worm**

Over the last year it has been great to see so many of our horse owners undertaking faecal egg counts to check on their horse’s parasite burdens rather than just drenching on a strict time-based programme. This time of year, however is slightly different when it comes to parasite control. The change in the weather from the recent drought to the warm wet rain will have greatly increased the parasite numbers. The main enemy at this time is the cyathostome (small red worm) which as the weather gets colder will form larval cysts in the gut wall.

We have had a recent increase in incidences of colic some of which are likely to be attributed to these worms.

Using faecal egg counts as part of a targeted parasite control programme should be a standard management technique for all horse owners. This not only helps to slow down the development of drench resistance but will also save money in most cases by reducing the amount of drench needing to be used. It allows us to manage each horse as an individual with regards to drenching and build up a picture of the overall farm dynamics with regards to parasites. As part of this programme however all horses should be drenched once at this time of year.

If you have performed regular FECs throughout the year and your horse has had consistently low results then using your base drench (usually a Macrocyclic Lactone such as Ivermectin or Abamectin) is fine but if you are unsure or have had a high result at any stage then you should use a moxidectin based drench which targets the encysted larvae before they have a chance to mature and emerge in spring. Moxidectin should not be used in foals or miniature horses. Using a drench that also contains Praziquantel will ensure your horse is also free of tapeworm (another worm that is difficult to detect on faecal egg counts).

Please feel free to contact us at the clinic if you are unsure what the best drench for your horse is, or if you have any further questions, and we will be happy to help. We have a paper available outlining a targeted parasite control programme in more detail and if you would like a copy then please contact us and we will send one out to you.