**Parasite control in young horses**

Parascaris equorum (ascarid) is the parasite of major importance in young foals and adolescent horses. They can pick up this parasite in the first few days of life by licking the mare’s udder or belly, usually when searching for the teat. This means infection begins at a very early stage in life, when the foal has almost no resistance or resilience. Faecal egg counts in these cases are not a helpful way of identifying infection, as eggs will only be passed if adult stages are present, but the larval stage can cause a lot of damage.

Thread worms are also infective at an early age because the larval stages can migrate through the mare and infect the foal via the milk. For this reason, parasite control in foals begins with treating the broodmare. All broodmares should receive a wormer within 4 weeks of expected foaling date and prior to entering the foaling paddock. This reduces the pasture burden that the new foal will face and reduces the chances of heavy early infestations. All foals should then receive their first drench at about 6 weeks of age. Avoid using moxidectin in these young stock and because Ascarids show resistance to macrocyclic lactones, (Ivermectin), Benzimidazole (Panacur ) is a good choice at this life stage. Drench should be repeated every 8 weeks from now until weaning. At this stage faecal egg counts can resume and drenching can be based on these results with the exception of a routine spring, autumn and early winter drench. After 15 -18 months young horses develop immunity to ascarids and a return to macrocyclic lactones is advised.

Flow Chart - Parasite Control in Young Horses.

Early autumn (mar)

Drench

Late autumn

FEC

FEC < 200

Early winter (june)

Drench using moxidectin/praziquantel

FEC>/= 200

Drench

Early spring (sept)

Drench

Late spring

FEC

FEC < 200

FEC < 200

FEC >/= 200

Early summer (dec)

FEC

Drench

FEC >/= 200

Drench

FEC < 200

Late summer

FEC

FEC >/= 200

Drench

Then return to start