

Pasture Management for Small Strongyle Control

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Horses on Pasture

- Strongyle larvae like to stay in the thatch layer in pastures near the ground since there is more moisture in this area.
- Horses tend to graze in certain areas (lawns) away from their manure piles where grass is left to grow higher (roughs) and where parasite concentrations are higher.
- For these reasons it is important to keep the number of horses in a pasture at a level that the horses do not graze the pasture down too much and have to graze in their roughs. Also, provide supplemental hay when needed to help keep the forage level at a reasonable height (greater than 4 inches).
- For control of ascarids (roundworms) in foals and weanlings, put mares with foals in pastures that have not been exposed to foals for the longest period of time.

Dragging

- Caution should be used when dragging or harrowing pastures as this practice spreads manure piles (which contain the majority of larvae) into the lawns the horses frequently graze on. Mature stage larvae (L3) can travel 4-12 inches from manure piles and on a slope, heavy rainfall can help them spread even further.
- Dragging or harrowing should only be done during the heat of summer when the exposed larvae die more quickly. Even then, horses should be kept off the pasture for at least one week to allow the parasite larvae time to die (longer periods if not extremely hot conditions).
- Parasite development from the egg is similar to seed growth, once the minimum temperature for growth has been reached, the rate of growth increases as the temperature increases.
- Parasites are able to survive for a longer time in cooler temperatures, similar to how fruits survive longer if kept in a refrigerator, therefore dragging is discouraged from the fall through the spring.
- If possible, do not drag pastures that are being continuously grazed by horses,

Manure

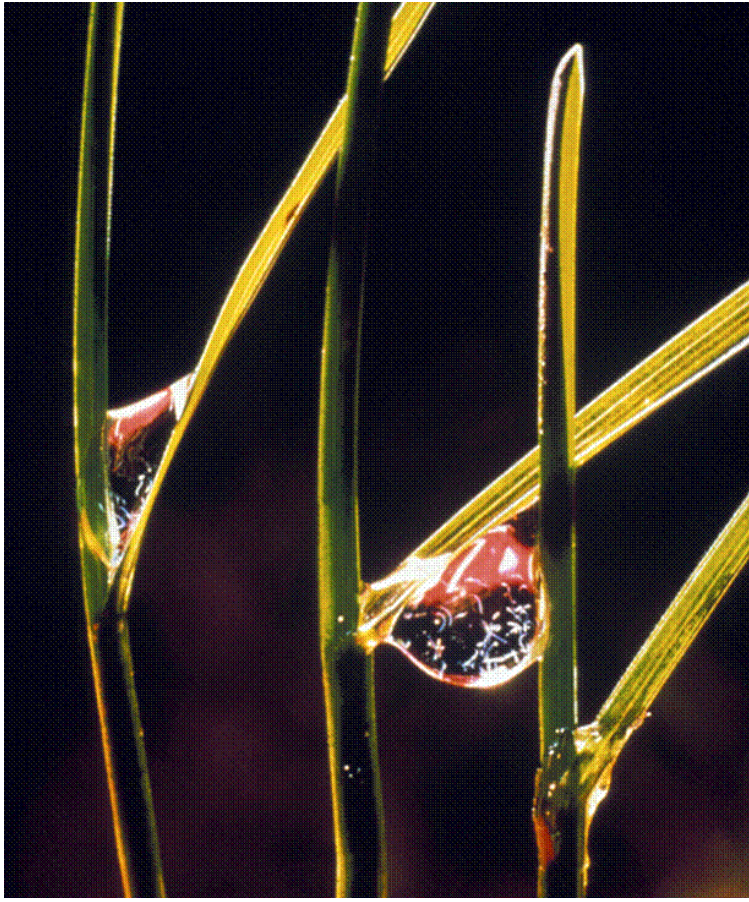
- NEVER spread fresh manure over fields being used for grazing as the eggs and larvae inside will then be exposed to horses on the pasture.
- Make sure that manure is composted thoroughly before spreading over fields; this will allow the heat of composting to kill the larvae present in the manure.

Alternatives

- If possible take the horses off the pasture and leave it unoccupied for a few months each year (remember that parasites survive for long periods in cooler weather).
- Convert the pasture into a hay field temporarily to get the horses off the grass.
- Rotate the horses in the pasture with another group of animals that consume about the same amount as the horses during the height of exposure (summer months).
- Parasites are host-specific so parasites that infect horses will not infect other species of livestock.

Deworming

- Remember that it is important to develop an overall small strongyle control program to help decrease parasite egg counts and larval burdens on pastures. This will include pasture management and the use of dewormers.
- Work with your veterinarian to perform regular fecal egg counts and deworm horses that have consistently high counts more often than those with high counts.
- We recommend only using FDA approved dewormers. Organic and herbal products that claim deworming activity have not been tested enough to prove efficacy.



The white, thread-like objects in the water droplets are strongyle larvae that have climbed the stems of the grass and are waiting to be eaten by a horse.

References

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Langrova, I.; Jankovska, I.; Borovsky, M.; Fiala, T. Effect of climatic influences on the migrations of infective larvae of Cyathostominae. *Vet Med – Czech*, 48 (1-2):18-24. 2003.