



Horse Care Info Sheet

Parasites—Botflies & Tapeworms

As the days grow cooler it is once again time to evaluate your horse's deworming program. Botflies and tapeworms are common problems in the fall. Thankfully, both of these bugs can be treated by deworming pastes, which are readily available at your local tack or feed store. As always, it is a good idea to talk with your veterinarian to determine the best course of action for you, your horse and your barn.

Botflies

What are they?

Horse bots are honey bee-sized flies that attach their tiny eggs to body hairs of horses, often on their legs. Horses ingest the newly hatched larvae, which then live in the horse's mouth and stomach lining. After many months, they are passed out through feces.

Potential Impact on the Horse:

- Damages the tissues of mouth and stomach lining
- Gastric ulcers
- Damage to stomach lining which can cause:
 - ◇ nutrient deprivation
 - ◇ blockage of food passage (raising the risk of colic)



Treatment:

Botfly eggs should be removed from the horse's coat – a tool called a 'bot knife' can be helpful in removal. Deworm your horse for botflies after the first frost. This will prevent the horse from becoming re-infected because cold weather kills the adult flies.

Tapeworms

What are they?

Tapeworms belong to a group of parasites called flatworms and can grow up to three feet long! Their head has four suckers which attach to mucosa of the intestine. Tapeworm infections are relatively common in horses on pasture in North America.

Potential Impact on the Horse:

- Colic
- Rough hair coat
- Nutrient deficiencies



- Severe inflammation at attachment site
- Mucosal ulceration
- Thickening of gut wall

Treatment:

It can be difficult to diagnose a tapeworm infection as the eggs are not readily detectable by examining a fecal sample. It is important to do a preventative deworming once a year (in the spring or fall) to treat possible infections. Consult with your veterinarian before treatment as tapeworms are resistant to many dewormers.

Equine Guelph would like to extend thanks to the Ontario Veterinary College veterinarians for input and content review of this fact sheet.

To learn more about managing parasites, read Equine Guelph's article on [parasite control](#) and information sheet on [fecal sample collection](#) and enroll in Equine Guelph's [Equine Health & Disease Prevention](#) course.