



BIANCA MCCARTY PHOTOGRAPHY

Preparing Your Horse for *Spring*

Check off all items on this list to be ready for a healthy, successful riding season

LUCILE VIGOUROUX, MSC

Springtime—a season we look forward to as equestrians. Riding arenas emerge from their snowy blankets. The sun shines longer and brighter every day. Much-awaited shows and competitions are right around the corner, and we're eager to shift things into the next gear.

Full of potential, the spring months set the tone for the rest of the year. The key with transitioning from winter to spring is to have a plan in place to tackle your horse's various seasonal needs. You should think about vaccinating and deworming, of course, but also about rebuilding your equine athlete's fitness after a winter hiatus. There's a lot to accomplish transitioning into spring, so let's get organized with a checklist:



EQUIMAX[®]
*(ivermectin 1.87%
 praziquantel 14.03%)*
Paste

Anthelmintic and Boticide
 FOR ORAL USE IN HORSES ONLY



EZE dose[™] syringe

For the treatment and control of all major parasites including tapeworms.

For use in horses 4 weeks of age and older, including stallions and breeding, lactating mares, up to 1,320 lbs.

Apple Flavored!



EQUIMAX[®] (ivermectin/praziquantel) Paste: FOR ORAL USE IN HORSES 4 WEEKS OF AGE AND OLDER. Not to be used in other animal species as severe adverse reactions, including fatalities in dogs, may result. Do not use in horses intended for human consumption. Swelling and itching reactions after treatment with ivermectin paste have occurred in horses carrying heavy infections of neck threadworm (*Onchocerca* sp. microfilariae), most likely due to microfilariae dying in large numbers. Not for use in humans. Ivermectin and ivermectin residues may adversely affect aquatic organisms, therefore dispose of product appropriately to avoid environmental contamination. EquimaxHorse.com © 2019 Bimeda, Inc. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

- Physical exam;
- Bloodwork (if recommended by your veterinarian);
- Dental exam;
- Fecal egg count;
- Deworming;
- Spring vaccines—core and risk-based;
- Body clipping (if applicable);
- Sheath cleaning;
- Blanket and tack maintenance/repair;
- Saddle fit evaluation;
- Diet evaluation;
- Spring cleaning and sanitizing;
- Coggins test; and
- Health certificate (aka certificate of veterinary inspection, or CVI) if your horse travels.

The Essentials

Physical and dental exam “Springtime is a great time to get your equine partner all checked out and ready to roll for the summer,” says Sarah Cohen, DVM, owner of Equi Performance Equine, an ambulatory veterinary practice based in Wellington, Florida. “During a routine annual physical exam, your veterinarian can look for any unnoticed issues in your horse’s heart, eyes, feet, or gastrointestinal tract. This is also an excellent time to perform an oral exam to assess the need for teeth

floating as well as identify any fractured teeth or other oral health issues.”

Vaccines Spring vaccines are a routine part of wellness exams. All horses in the United States should receive the four core vaccines—rabies, tetanus, West Nile virus (WNV), and Eastern/Western equine encephalomyelitis (EEE/WEE)—and then get boosted annually. These boosters are generally given in the spring to maximize protection against WNV/EEE/WEE when mosquitoes, which spread these diseases, emerge in early summer.

Beyond these four, different geographical areas present different equine infectious disease challenges and, therefore, require different immunization protocols. “Veterinary practitioners in your specific areas will know best how to advise you regarding risk-based vaccines and guide you with respect to the needed frequency of vaccination,” Cohen says.

Regions with year-round hot and humid climates—Cohen’s Florida being a prime example—have the added challenge of persisting mosquito populations, warranting biannual vaccination against WNV and EEE/WEE.

In addition to geographic risks, you must consider farm-specific risks. Facilities housing broodmares or frequently



CLIX PHOTOGRAPHY

Spring is an excellent time for your veterinarian to perform an oral exam to assess the need for teeth floating as well as identify any fractured teeth or other oral health issues.

traveling show horses, for example, need to provide their horses additional protection (immunization) against influenza and equine herpesvirus (EHV).

Parting words from Cohen about vaccines: “They are safe and inexpensive. Treating a vaccine-preventable disease is both costly and heartbreaking.”

Parasite control Internal parasites can damage your horse’s internal organs, especially those of the digestive tract. Equine parasitic burdens vary based on the age of the individual, geographical region, and herd immunity, says Constance Gorman, DVM—hence the importance of consulting your veterinarian when formulating a parasite control plan. Gorman is a field care associate at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute, in Lexington, Kentucky, and an FEI treating veterinarian.

The first step in parasite prevention is performing a fecal egg count (FEC) in the spring and fall to see what types of parasites might be living inside your horse, our sources say. When possible, Gorman does an FEC before deworming and again two weeks later to measure the dewormer’s efficacy, a process known as a fecal egg count reduction test.

Identifying and quantifying your horse’s internal parasitic load—rather than deworming willy-nilly—is key to slowing the dewormer resistance problem caused by indiscriminate administration of anthelmintics over several decades. “Individual FEC also allows more informed and more targeted deworming, thus increasing the effectiveness of each treatment,” says Cohen.

The FEC is not foolproof, however. “Tapeworm eggs can be difficult to find, so I recommend deworming every horse at least annually with praziquantel regardless of FEC results,” says Gorman.

Springtime Challenges

Skin issues April showers bring May pastern sores. When snow melts into mud, many horse owners find themselves dealing with scruffy skin. Damp conditions and long haircoats can leave skin, especially on the legs, at the mercy of trapped bacteria and fungi.

Dermatophilosis (aka rain rot) is a common diagnosis. When caught early, you can usually resolve this skin infection with a couple of thorough scrubby baths, says Cohen, mixing a small amount of



SHELLEY PAULSON

As warmer weather rolls around, take the time to perform a deep spring cleaning of your barn and equipment.

dilute povidone-iodine with the shampoo. “In some rare cases of severe dermatophilosis, antibiotics may be prescribed to combat the infection,” she adds.

“With dermatophilosis and similar conditions, daily nursing care is often necessary,” says Cohen. “Otherwise, recurrent
(Continued on page 29)

FEC SOURCE.COM
We supply the highest quality McMaster Method veterinary slides on the market today.

- ▶ Fast Shipping
- ▶ Scratch-resistant Acrylic
- ▶ Wholesale Pricing / Bulk Discounts
- ▶ Designed to be used again and again
- ▶ For Labs, Parasitologists, Veterinarians and anyone conducting FEC (Fecal Egg Count) tests.

FEC SOURCE.COM
Or find us on Amazon!

MADE IN USA

(Continued from page 25)

skin issues can result in painful sores or even lameness.”

She and Gorman share tips for protecting your horse’s legs from mud and the skin issues it can cause:

- Keep the hair around the pastern clean and dry by brushing or toweling off dirt.
- Dry and groom your horse after heavy rain to reduce bacteria and fungus buildup on the skin.
- Apply ointments only if recommended by your vet, as gooey substances can trap bacteria near the skin.
- Pick your horse’s feet daily to remove rocks packed in with the mud and to check for and manage signs of thrush.

Hoof issues “Thrush is caused and exacerbated by damp environments common during the spring season and sometimes also by poor hoof hygiene,” Cohen says. “If meticulous hoof care and over-the-counter treatments don’t work or if your horse is footsore or lame, it’s time to call your veterinarian.”

“Additionally, during the spring season hoof growth increases, so farrier upkeep is more important than ever,” Gorman says. “If the hoof has had a chance to overgrow and there are some cracks or separation along the white line area, this gives bacteria a chance to invade the foot and cause painful hoof abscesses.” (Read more about these hoof issues on page 42.)

Spring grass and diet With lush spring grass, keep two things in mind: disease prevention and grazing in moderation. Spring is a precarious time for equids prone to obesity, metabolic dysregulation, and the hoof disease laminitis.

As your veterinarian will tell you, limiting metabolically challenged horses’ nonstructural carbohydrate (NSC) intake is essential. Grass consumption can aggravate conditions such as insulin dysregulation, equine metabolic syndrome, and pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID, formerly equine Cushing’s disease). That’s mainly because fresh grass contains large amounts of the NSCs starch and sugar.

“Grasses, which are naturally high in sugar, generally have an even higher sugar content in the spring and fall,” Cohen says. “And the sugar content in grass actually increases through the day, so the safest time to graze at-risk animals is in the early morning hours.”

Unfortunately, with certain horses, being selective about timing isn’t enough. “For at-risk individuals, it’s safest to stay off the grass entirely,” Cohen says. If that’s not an option, she recommends using a grazing muzzle when putting vulnerable equids on pasture. Research shows that properly fitted grazing muzzles reduce grass intake by 78-83% (Longland et al.,

2012), making them safe and effective grazing moderation tools. You can also feed hay, of course, but recognize it contains NSCs that you might need to soak away before feeding.

Prioritize prevention, and don’t wait for the arrival of spring grass to take the steps necessary to keep your horse safe. Starting in late winter, Cohen

Pala-Tech™

LABORATORIES

The Science of Palatability™



Coughing? Difficulty Breathing? Heaves?
Talk to your veterinarian about

Pala-Tech’s Equine BALT™

Respiratory Advantage

Granules & Paste

to effectively manage these conditions.

BALT Respiratory Advantage

(Natural Support for Respiratory System)

- ✓ Optimizes the horse’s respiratory efficiency and function.
- ✓ Aids in the dilation of the horse’s airway passages.
- ✓ Provides quick results (within one hour) to avoid a cascading allergic response.
- ✓ Decreases the impact from many allergens and contaminants in the air.
- ✓ Dose to effect based on the horse’s condition.

BALT Granules

- ✓ Flavored with sweet apple and molasses flavor to simplify daily dosing.
- ✓ Ideal for maintenance use and long-term administration.
- ✓ Cost effective option to improve horse’s respiratory function.



BALT Paste

- ✓ Formulation to use for acute conditions to provide immediate relief.
- ✓ Administer the necessary dose for optimum clinical effect.



Pala-Tech Laboratories, Inc. Lakeville, MN 55044
www.palatech.com | 1-888-337-2446

recommends asking your veterinarian to pull blood and check on your horse's metabolic status. The goal is to determine if you need to adjust medication, diet, and/or management tactics.

On the topic of nutrition, spring is a good time to consider whether your horse's diet is still meeting his needs. If his workload has fluctuated over the past few months and/or if his weight or energy

levels have changed, take a fresh look at what goes in his feed bucket. "Steady increase in proper caloric intake may be necessary as your horse begins to work in higher intensity during the spring," Gorman says. Your veterinarian or nutritionist can advise you when reevaluating feeding plans for horses in your barn.

Haircoat and body clipping With both ambient temperatures and riding time on

the rise during spring, we sometimes find ourselves sliding off sweat-soaked mounts that take hours to dry. Shaving away that bothersome winter coat is an appealing solution, albeit a controversial one.

"Many factors will affect whether body clipping is the best thing for you and your horse," Gorman says. "Location and weather—especially humidity—breed of horse, discipline, and level of work are all important elements to consider."

If a horse is in an intense training program, she says she has no qualms about body clipping if the owner is aware of the precautions they must take during inclement weather. "I would not, however, body clip past February or March because that could affect your horse's summer coat that is coming in as he sheds," Gorman says. "That's of course excluding horses with PPID, for which clipping year-round may be necessary to maintain comfort."

The main point is the choice to body clip will depend on individual circumstances affecting you and your horse.

Bringing Your Horse Back Into Work

With bitter weather and limited daylight during winter, many of us opt to take a break from riding. If you're one of those riders, you certainly know bringing horses back into work from a period of rest requires preparation and patience.

Gorman walks us through her protocol: "If an equine athlete is starting back from several months off, I do recommend having your veterinarian perform a basic flexion exam. Ensuring that tendons, ligaments, and joints haven't sustained any damage before starting work again will set you up for a successful comeback."

She and other experts agree that taking things slowly when working back up to previous athletic ability is a must. "Walk and trot large circles," she says. "Ride up hills. Do five to 10 minutes of supple walking and bending between trot intervals. Ride in shorter trot/canter intervals for the first few weeks as your horse is regaining both cardiovascular and musculoskeletal fitness. And don't forget to give him breaks. Recovery is just as important for muscle conditioning as is the actual work."

As fitness increases, so does muscle mass. Bulkier muscles could translate to altered saddle fit, so reach out to a professional saddle fitter if your horse shows



- Fully automated fecal analyzer
- Low per test cost
- No upfront costs for hardware
- Monthly and annual plans
- Scientifically validated
- Email results sent directly to veterinarians and/or clients
- Integrates with most PMS systems to streamline transfer of results to records

Fecals matter.

Instant, push-button fecals save you time and money.

Is Parasight System right for my business?

If you perform 5 fecal egg counts a week or more, the answer is YES!

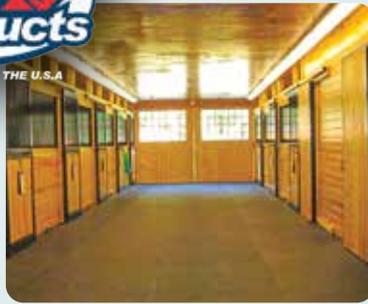


For more information and sales:
 Mark White
 859.397.0214
 mwhite@parasightsystem.com
 www.parasightsystem.com

Padding & Safety Flooring Specialists



PROUDLY MADE IN THE U.S.A.



Dandy Products, Inc.

3314 State Route 131, Goshen, OH 45122

Toll Free: 888.883.8386 • 513.625.3000

www.dandyproducts.net

PREPARING YOUR HORSE FOR SPRING

signs of discomfort through his back as you return him to fitness.

Final Step: Spring Cleaning

Now that you've checked all the horse care items off your list, it's time to prepare your horse's living environment for the new season ahead. The past two years spent navigating life through a pandemic have taught us more than most care to know about sanitation and biosecurity. As warmer weather rolls around, take the time to perform a deep spring cleaning of your barn and equipment. Run blankets through the washer, soak your grooming brushes in disinfectant, and scrub that muck off the stall walls. Whether we're talking about thrush or EHV, good hygiene is a key part of disease prevention.

Take-Home Message

Your horse has individual needs. To keep him protected and healthy, you must provide him with the right care at the appropriate times. Full of changes and challenges, spring is an important season to stick to the preventive health care plan devised with your veterinarian. By being diligent about vaccinations, deworming, diet, and other routine necessities, you can do your part to ensure your horse has a long and productive life. 🐾

STOP THE STOMP!

Use loose-fitting, chemical free *Shoofly* LEGGINGS during fly season to prevent painful fly bites and reduce stressful stomping.



- Prevents Botflies from laying eggs causing hoof damage
- Decreases healing time of abrasions and wounds by allowing air flow
- Easy to attach, comfortable to wear and will not sag due to their unique sewn-in plastic stays



Patented Design: US 10,142,058
Shoofly LEGGINGS

The Best Fly-Bite Protection on the Planet
(for horses)
www.shooflyleggings.com

Exclusively Distributed By:



www.stonemfg.net

Blue, Pink and Orange Colors Available
Sizes Available

Mini, Pony/Donkey, Yearling, Small, Medium and Large

Take-Home Message for Veterinarians

Incentivizing horse owners to schedule routine spring wellness exams remains of utmost importance. From addressing infectious disease prevention through timely immunization to detecting small dental anomalies before digestive upset ensues, there are many benefits to getting a professional eye on equine patients each spring. In terms of internal parasitism, deworming protocols have evolved to combat widespread anthelmintic resistance. Compared to the past 50 years, the parasitic fauna of today's horse rarely includes *Strongylus vulgaris* or other large strongyles, and cyathostomins and tapeworm infections are common concerns in adult horses. The focus remains on identifying high shedders and providing personalized FEC-based deworming recommendations according to individual parasitic load.