

## Ground Fungi and Wormers

### Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group

Hi all,

We have recently received this enquiry in the GAP office. Does anyone have any useful information? Here is the email:

We run two herds of 'wild' Exmoor ponies numbering 47 animals for conservation grazing purposes. This year, on two of the lowland heath sites which we summer graze, Nail fungus (*Poronia punctata*) has been discovered - a red data book and SAP species which is 'possibly Europe's rarest fungi'. Can anyone enlighten me on any known negative affects between wormers and ground fungi? Incidentally, we do not use ivermectin-based drugs.

many thanks,

Adam Cormack

(GAP Administrator)

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I would presume that any non residual wormer would be best in such uncertainty. If you treat -leave animals in the treatment area for 24 hours after treatment and give only hay after 4-6 hours following treatment.

David

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Nail fungus reappeared on Hartland Moor in Purbeck a few years back, apparently dispersed by some New Forest ponies actually from the New Forest(where it is still extant). There are also Exmoor ponies grazing the site now.

David Hodd might be able to shed some light on their worming treatment?

Best wishes, Sophie

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Whatever wormer you decide to use, ring the manufacturers and ask them direct and to send you any literature relevant to the product put together as part of the licensing process (I can't remember what this is called - product data sheet? Environmental data sheet? or similar); you can also put product name and active ingredients in to Google and see what turns up (this normally does the trick)

Lastly, do you need to worm at all???

regards

Jim

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Rob McGibbon of the Surrey Heathland Project has three ponies that have been grazing the heaths since 1998. They were only wormed when they were younger and have been wormer-free for several years now without ill-effect. This year, there was an astounding crop of Poronia on two of the sites that they graze. Not sure the spores came with the ponies or if they'd been lying dormant on the site waiting for an equine gut to wake them up

The grazing is obviously very extensive and I assume the worm-burden on the heaths is very low so regular worming hasn't been necessary. The ponies do remarkably well, even in winter, and the biggest problem seems to be a strong tendency to develop laminitis as soon as the grass gets going.

Cheers

Rachel

Dr Rachel O'Hara

Surrey Wildlife Trust

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The guy who ran Trace Element Services maintained that some trace elements act as wormers in particular cobalt if I remember the conversation from 20 years ago, which is very doubtful. It may have been "Mandy's immortal words" - "He would say that wouldn't he". My interest was ruminants so this may be off target.

Richard M

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I remember learning that the benzamidazole wormers (the cheap white drenches that started the trend to worm livestock routinely) are/were used originally as fungicides in overseas transport of fruit. However i have never heard that they are residually active in the dung of treated animals.

Anon

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Hello Rachel,

Interesting to hear about the Poronia. I wish I knew more about dung and just what other helpful things can be carried in it!

Here's what I do know about pony worming, if its any use!

With ponies it is essential to worm regularly during the first year in particular, if you want a healthy animal in the future. Certainly during this time the gut is much more prone to permanent damage. However the ONLY way you can answer the question 'do you need to worm' is by taking a worm count! This is easy, a dung sample taken from the pony and an over the counter kit can be used. No environmental impact and a safeguard. Certainly the outside appearance of the animal is not always an indication of worm burden, and because the animal looks OK doesn't mean there are no worms doing damage internally! Redworm in particular can be a time bomb and can migrate through

more or less the whole body and can kill animal suddenly. There is lots of excellent veterinary information, from the professionals, to be had with a little searching. Don't forget the manufacturer want to sell lots of wormer!

It is important in order to minimise the need for worming to not let the pasture get infected in the first place. Putting 'clean' worm free animals on to start with will give everyone a head start. If they have to be moved, worm them in a holding area and allow some withdrawal time before relocating. Sadly worms don't discriminate. It is worth remembering that any breed of pony can die from worm induced colic or a red worm organ failure or bleed. I keep our ponies fairly worm free with a combination of non-ivermectin based wormers, given at home, plus regular moving and resting grazed areas, which is more important with regard to smaller sites. I also take an annual worm count from the youngest pony.

Laminitis is another kettle of fish! Our vet reports a huge increase in laminitis across the board. The grass has been 'weird' growing fast at unseasonal times. Climate change? We have had a pony with a mild attack recently, unheard of in December! Mild winters means less weight loss also.

Have a great Christmas all, (don't 'nibble' too much!)

Margaret.

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