

LARGE REDWORM

The comeback we could all be missing

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A full reference list and more information can be found online here.

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“There is significant concern about the re-emergence of large redworm species, especially *Strongylus vulgaris*...”²²

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Given wide ranging concern over a reemergence of large redworm in the UK^{16,22}, a literature review was carried out to determine a risk-based framework for integrating large strongyle larval culturing into targeted parasite control programmes.

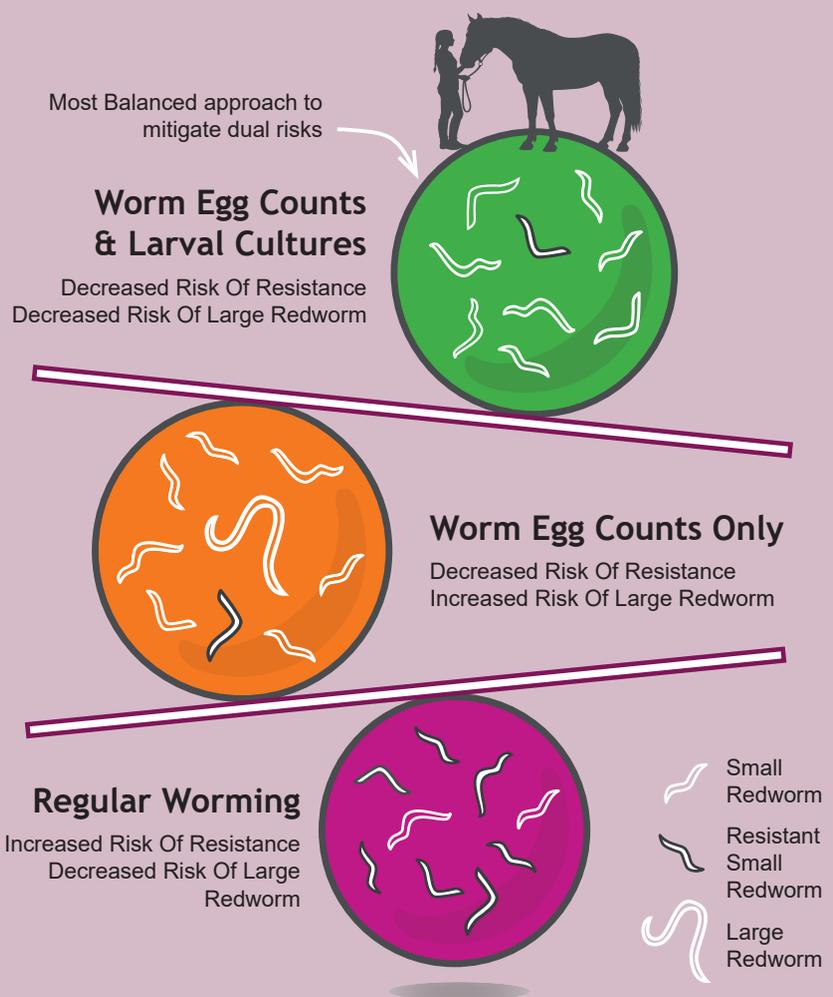
Large strongyle eggs cannot be distinguished from those of small strongyles on a worm egg count²⁴. A larval culture test, now commercially available in the UK, allows for species-specific detection of large strongyles. The technique involves incubating faecal samples for 10–14 days, allowing eggs to hatch and develop into third-stage larvae, which are then morphologically identified²³.

There is strong evidence from multiple studies that utilising worm egg counts alone may allow for large redworm burdens to develop, due to the low frequency of worming. Regular worming decreases the risk of large redworm, however these regular treatments through the year will drastically increase the speed at which small redworms become resistant to the chemicals used^{13,17,18,19,20,21}. Tyden et al. 2019 demonstrated that incorporating larval culture into a targeted parasite control programme results in an even lower risk of large redworm than worming at regular intervals, without an increase in the rate of resistance developing²¹.

Additionally, there is evidence for age impacting on the risk of large redworm. Though large redworm appears to affect horses of all ages, there may be an increased risk between the ages of 1-3 years^{1,3,19}. There may also be an increase in risk with ageing in adult horses, but the evidence for this is more limited^{1,3,10,11}. Some studies found that horses infected with one kind of large redworm are more likely to be infected with another^{7,16} and there is some evidence for reduced hours at pasture reducing the risk of large redworm infection¹³. However, other studies found no association for both of these risk factors^{4,11}.

Male and female horses seem to be equally at risk for large redworm^{2,3,5,15}. Notably, colic symptoms, other clinical signs and body condition score have all been found to have no correlation with large redworm infection^{5,6,9,11,21}.

The findings mean that horses may not appear to be infected prior to the onset of serious illness or



The impact of different strategies on the risk of both small redworm resistance and large redworm infection.

death. This highlights the need to incorporate testing for large redworm into a targeted parasite control programme. As there is no strong evidence for season impacting on the risk of large redworm infection^{2,11}, larval culture is likely to be appropriate at any time of year.

> Taken together, these findings support a shift toward more evidence-led parasite surveillance in horses. Incorporating large

strongyle testing allows yards, prescribers and veterinarians to identify hidden risk, protect individual horse welfare and make informed treatment decisions without increasing selection pressure for resistance. Ongoing monitoring, data sharing and continued research will be essential to ensure parasite control strategies remain both effective and sustainable in the face of changing epidemiology.