

Protection from summer parasites

The warmth and rain has brought us and our horses many pests so far this season, including ticks, mosquitoes, and various other insects and flies.

These pests also are either responsible for the transmission of or are the direct causative agent for various illnesses and diseases in both people and horses. A few examples in the horse would include; Piroplasmosis, Lyme Disease, Potomac Horse Fever, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE), West Nile Virus, and skin or eye allergies.

In order to provide the best protection for horses during these next few months a multi-strategic approach should be initiated to keep horses as healthy and safe as possible.

The first aspect of this approach is to immunize horses properly with vaccines aimed at preventing or lessening the severity of diseases caused or spread through insects. Examples would include West Nile, EEE, WEE, and Potomac Horse Fever.

Each horse and situation is different, so contact your veterinarian for a tailored plan for which vaccines are appropriate for your horse.

Secondly, manage the horses' environment

to greatly reduce the numbers of pests they come in contact with. By simply eliminating places where insects and ticks like to propagate and live, their numbers can be greatly reduced.

Keep pastures mowed, move brush and woodpiles away from paddocks, remove manure daily, remove places where water can stagnate, house cattle and horses separately, and keep the barn and stable area clean and uncluttered.

The final aspect of management applies to caring for the horse. Horses should be groomed daily, fitted with flymasks, and stalled in areas with fans and fine mesh over windows during times of peak insect feeding to limit exposure.

Apply residual insect repellents than contain permethrin to cool, dry skin daily just prior to times when insects are noted to be most active. To help control ticks do not forget to spray under the belly and tail. A fipronil spray also can be used once a week.

The bottom line is no one spray or management practice will adequately protect your horse this summer. A multiple-armed approach, however, will greatly reduce your horses' discomfort and potential for sickness.



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