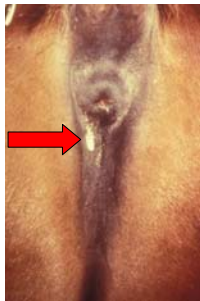


What Are Pinworms?

- Pinworms are tiny worms (approximately 1-5 cm long) that can be found in the intestinal tract of horses.
- The scientific name for equine pinworms is *Oxyuris equi*.
- Pinworms can be found in horses of any age, but problems are more common in young horses.
- Problems with pinworms are associated with the adult form of the parasite. It takes about five months from the time a horse is infected with the larvae for pinworms to grow to adults.



What Problems Do Pinworms Cause In Horses?



- Pinworms often cause no problems at all in horses. When they do become an issue, they are more of an **annoyance** than a significant health problem.
- Although pinworms live in the intestinal tract, that is not where they cause problems - female pinworms actually crawl out of the horse's rectum and deposit a very sticky substance on the skin around the anus. This sticky substance contains the pinworm eggs (see picture right) (photo credit: Ontario Veterinary College).
 - ▶ This sticky substance, not the eggs, causes the problem, because it can be very irritating.
 - ▶ Affected horses typically rub their tails against objects because of the itching and irritation of the anus caused by the sticky substance. This can lead to hair loss over the tailhead and a "rat-tailed" appearance.

How Do Horses Get Pinworms?

- Horses become infected by swallowing pinworm eggs. This may happen if they come in direct contact with the eggs on an infected horse, or if they eat eggs on pasture or hay that have fallen off an infected horse.



How Is Infection With Pinworms Diagnosed?

- The adult pinworms are rarely seen, because they usually crawl out to lay their eggs at night.
- The most common way to diagnose pinworm infection is for your veterinarian to stick a piece of clear tape to the area around the horse's anus, then remove it and look for pinworm eggs under a microscope.

How Are Pinworms Treated?

- Most dewormers are effective against adult pinworms, including ivermectin, moxidectin, fenbendazole and pyrantel pamoate, although resistance to ivermectin has been reported in some areas.
- There is very little that can be done to treat the irritation of the horse's tailhead directly, but it will resolve on its own once the pinworm infection has been treated.
- If the horse has rubbed its hind end to the point that the skin is broken or raw, keep the area as clean as possible and watch for signs of infection (e.g. discharge, foul smell). If the area appears infected or does not seem to be healing, contact your veterinarian. The horse may need to be treated with antibiotics to eliminate the infection.



How Do I Prevent My Horse From Getting Pinworms?

The best way to prevent pinworms is to follow a regular deworming program, as directed by your veterinarian.

Can I Get Pinworms From My Horse?

No. Pinworms are species-specific. The pinworms from one animal species cannot infect another species. People can get pinworms, but these pinworms come from other people. People cannot become infected by horse pinworms, nor pinworms from any other animal species.

