Chapter 1. Assessing the need for anthelmintic use

Overview

When designing a control programme, a risk assessment approach should be undertaken, considering factors such as:

- **C**linical history – previous history of parasitic disease (in the individual and on the premises) and overall health of the horses
- **A**ge profile
- **N**umber of horses on the premises and stocking density
- **T**est results – including faecal egg counts (FEC), faecal egg count reduction tests (FECRT), tapeworm ELISA, small redworm (cyathostomin) ELISA
- **E**nvironment – pasture management, open/closed herd, quarantine procedures, time of year
- to inform the overall **R**isk profile.

Using a risk assessment approach helps to inform an evidence-based decision on which horses require, and, importantly, which horses do not require anthelmintic treatment. Gaining appropriate information on these risk factors and understanding the parasite species present will help to determine the potential risk of clinical disease occurring and inform appropriate action to take.

Most equine anthelmintics are legally classed as POM-VPS medicines, and can be prescribed for routine use by veterinarians, pharmacists and suitably qualified persons (SQPs). However, only veterinary surgeons can prescribe medicines under the cascade, if the use of certain unlicensed specific anthelmintics is considered appropriate. For non-routine use, for example in horses affected by confirmed or suspected parasite-associated disease, consultation with a veterinary surgeon is required since diagnosis can only be undertaken by a veterinary surgeon.