



MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND / COLLEGE PARK • EASTERN SHORE

Dr. Amy Burk • 301-405-8337 • amyburk@umd.edu
Erin Petersen • 301-405-4690 • petersdr@umd.edu

APRIL EXTENSION HAPPENINGS

- April 4, 6-8 p.m.: New Private (Pesticide) Applicator Class, Ellicott City (call 410-313-2707 for more information)
- April 12, 6-7 p.m.: New Private (Pesticide) Applicator Examination, Ellicott City
- April 21, 8-4 p.m.: Maryland 4-H Horse Judging Clinic, Carroll County Ag Center, Westminster
- April 28, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.: Ag at Maryland Day, University of Maryland/College Park Campus. Bring the whole family for a day of fun at the farm! All are invited to "Explore Our World" and enjoy more than 450 activities offering something for everyone, including tours and exhibits, live performances and sporting events, hands-on demonstrations and workshops, petting zoos, dairy delights and much more. Admission and parking are free and campus navigation made easy with complimentary activity maps to help visitors find their way. For more information, visit <http://www.marylandday.umd.edu/>.

Ask the Experts

Q Do all horses need to be supplemented with electrolytes during the summer?

A The simple answer is "No." Not all horses require electrolytes during the summer. Electrolytes are minerals like sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium, and magnesium that are electrically charged and play an important role in normal nerve and muscle function. Most horses at maintenance or those lightly exercised receive adequate amounts of electrolytes from a daily diet that contains forage, grain, and the supplemental sodium chloride found in white salt blocks. Horses that are more prone to losing a larger amount of fluid and electrolytes are those engaged in heavy or prolonged exercise in hot and humid temperatures, like endurance horses, race-horses, or three-day event horses. In fact, an exercising horse can lose fluids that amount to 1.5 – 7.0 % of his or her body weight, depending on the exercise level and the ambient temperature.

When fluids and electrolytes lost in sweat aren't replaced, horses can become dehydrated and develop an electrolyte imbalance that may lead to muscle cramping, premature fatigue, heat stress, tying-up (exertional myopathy), and thumps (synchronous diaphragmatic flutter). To make sure that heavily exercised horses maintain a balanced electrolyte status, supplemental electrolytes may be needed. Electrolytes are commercially available as pastes or powders and can be administered on a daily basis or given before, during, or after strenuous exercise. Talk to your veterinarian about your horse's possible need for electrolyte supplementation and make sure to follow administration guidelines if you decide to supplement your horse's diet with electrolytes.

Q I'd like to try rotational grazing on my farm, but I don't have a lot of money for fencing. Do you have any suggestions?

A Rotating horses through several grass paddocks instead of one continuous pasture is a great way to improve pasture production and the horse's nutrition, while reducing the environmental impact of the horse operation. Existing fenced pastures can be further divided into smaller paddocks by using temporary one or two-strand electric fences. You'll need to invest in electric tape, insulator clips that hold the tape to fiberglass rods, fiberglass rods, splice buckles to join or repair sections, and a solar or battery powered fence charger. Keep the rod spacing to 12 feet and be sure to keep the fence charged at all times. The internal fence is fairly easy to construct, but keep in mind that horses require a water source every time they are moved to a new paddock. Constructing a "sacrifice area" that contains a shelter, water and hay if needed, can reduce the need for water systems in every paddock – but only if horses have unlimited access to it. There are funds available through the National Resource Conservation Service that will help increase the number of water systems available to the animals.



Q Where can I have my horses' feces tested for parasite eggs? Also, if one horse has worms, is it correct to say that all of my horses will have the same parasites?

A Several of the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Diagnostic Labs will perform fecal floatation tests (\$10 for in-state clients; \$15 for out of state) to determine the presence of parasite eggs. About 1/2 to 2 oz. of fresh feces should be put into a sterile, 4 oz. screw-cap container if shipping, or an airtight plastic bag if dropping off that day. If you are shipping the sample to the lab, you'll need to keep it refrigerated prior to shipment and keep it cold within the shipping container. Also, remember to include your name and contact information, the horse's name, species, breed, sex, and the test required. To find the lab nearest you, visit http://www.mda.state.md.us/animal_health/ or call 800-492-5590. Make sure to discuss the results with your veterinarian so that a proper deworming plan can be developed.

It's best not to assume that all the horses are alike. The fact that one horse's sample is free of parasite eggs doesn't mean that the others don't have parasites. Some horses develop a stronger immune response to parasites and can actually develop a resistance to, for example, ascarids (roundworms). Alternatively, some horses are more susceptible to parasite infection. It's best to test a larger sample of horses – or better still, *all* of your horses – to be sure about the presence of parasites and the proper deworming program for each horse.



Amy Burk, PhD
Extension Horse Specialist
University of Maryland
www.equinestudies.umd.edu

This column is sponsored by the University of Maryland. The views expressed herein are those of the author and are not necessarily those of The Equiry's publisher or staff.