Position Statement on Parasite Control for Working Animals

Version: 1.0

Commencement Date: 23 July 2025

Review Date: 23 June 2026

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Citation:
Working Animals Federation of Australia (WAFA), “Position Statement on Parasite Control for Working Animals”, Version 1.0 June 23, 2025, www.workinganimals.com.au/guidance

**Introduction**

The Working Animal Federation of Australia (WAFA) advocates for comprehensive, evidence-based parasite control programs to safeguard the health and welfare of working animals. Parasites, both external (ecto-parasites) and internal (endo-parasites), can significantly impact an animal's health, performance, and overall quality of life. Effective prevention, monitoring, and treatment are essential to maintaining their well-being and ability to perform their roles.

**Recommendations for Parasite Control**

1. Internal Parasite (Endo-Parasite) Management:
    - Preventive measures against external parasites, such as roundworms, whipworms, tapeworms, threadworms and liver flukes should be implemented year-round, particularly in high-risk areas. This should include rotation of dewormers to prevent resistant populations from emerging.
    - Effective, species-appropriate treatments, including topical spot-ons, oral medications, sprays, or collars, should be used as needed.
    - Regular diagnostic testing, such as routine faecal floats or faecal egg counts, is a suitable alternative to routine deworming in healthy animals.
    - Treatment for internal parasites, including intestinal worms (e.g., roundworms, hookworms, whipworms) and protozoa (e.g., Giardia, coccidia), should be based on veterinary recommendations and test results to prevent unnecessary medication and reduce resistance risks.
    - Heartworm prevention, where applicable, should follow veterinary advice and be maintained year-round particularly in endemic regions.
2. External Parasite (Ecto-Parasite) Management:
    - Preventive measures against external parasites, such as fleas, ticks, mites, and lice, should be implemented year-round, particularly in high-risk areas. This should include rotation of dewormers to prevent resistant populations from emerging.
    - Effective, species-appropriate treatments, including topical spot-ons, oral medications, sprays, or collars, should be used as needed.
    - Regular physical inspections for ticks or signs of infestation should be conducted, particularly for animals working in rural, bushland, or heavily vegetated environments.
3. Integrated Parasite Control Programs:
    - Parasite control strategies should be tailored to the individual animal's species, environment, and lifestyle, considering factors such as housing, travel, and exposure to other animals.

- Animals in high-risk environments or those with heavy workloads may require more frequent monitoring and preventive measures for both ecto- and endo-parasites.
- Collaboration with veterinarians to create an individualized parasite control program is encouraged for optimal outcomes.

**Benefits of Comprehensive Parasite Control**

- Improved Health and Performance: Effective control of endo- and ecto-parasites prevents conditions such as anaemia, malnutrition, skin irritation, and systemic illness, allowing animals to perform their roles effectively.
- Targeted and Responsible Treatment: Utilising diagnostic testing for internal parasites and monitoring for external parasites helps avoid unnecessary treatments, minimizing risks of drug resistance and side effects.
- Cost-Effectiveness: Proactive testing and prevention reduce the long-term costs associated with treating severe parasitic infections.

**Special Considerations**

- Young, senior, or immunocompromised animals may require more frequent monitoring and treatments for both internal and external parasites.
- Animals in regions with a high prevalence of specific parasites, such as ticks that transmit diseases like Lyme disease or Babesia, may need specialized preventive measures.
- Parasite control programs should consider local environmental factors, such as seasonal variations, that may influence parasite activity.

WAFA supports a holistic approach to parasite control that includes prevention, monitoring, and targeted treatment for both endo- and ecto-parasites. By prioritizing the health and welfare of working animals, we can ensure their longevity, performance, and quality of life.

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Document Control

| Version | Date | Author | Change Description | Approved By |
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| V1.0 | 23/07/2025 | V. Solomon | Initial | C.Williams |