

EVSA Award
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As the RVC recipient of the EVSA award, I was able to spend the week with Richard Gerken, Master Farrier, and his apprentice, Jesse Gough. I was made to feel very welcomed as soon as I arrived and for the length of my stay. As Jesse is very close to sitting his exam with the WCF, the week proved to be a great learning experience for me as well as revision for him.

The week began with basic evaluation of the distal limb conformation. We went over HPA, heel height comparison along the long axis of the third metacarpal, and the importance of watching a horse ambulate before and after shoeing or trimming. These factors together are important in determining the foot's balance and can point to where prophylactic trimming and shoeing may be needed. We discussed different types of shoes, such as the natural balance shoe and imprint shoe, and when a horse would benefit from them.



Through the week I was lucky to see a variety of cases where different courses of remedial shoeing were needed. On multiple occasions Richard would begin a discussion on treatments by asking me what I thought of a horse's conformation, and this really helped me get my eye focused on the subtleties of a horse's hoof placement. For one horse with low heels, graduated leather pads were applied to increase



the sole angle of the pedal bone. This would also alleviate some strain on the flexor tendons. Another horse with cracks in the hoof wall was put on heart bar shoes to provide maximum support and to stop expansion of the hoof wall, and therefore the crack. A Kevlar plaster was applied to discourage vertical motion on each side of the defect. We also saw a foal suffering from clubbed feet, and I learned that this could be a result of increased nutrition, trauma, or a congenital issue. As this foal was only a few months old, we talked about how a shoe with a dorsal extension will

help encourage the heel to drop lower and the toe to extend cranially. If caught early enough, this would decrease the chances of the foal needing surgical treatment later in life.

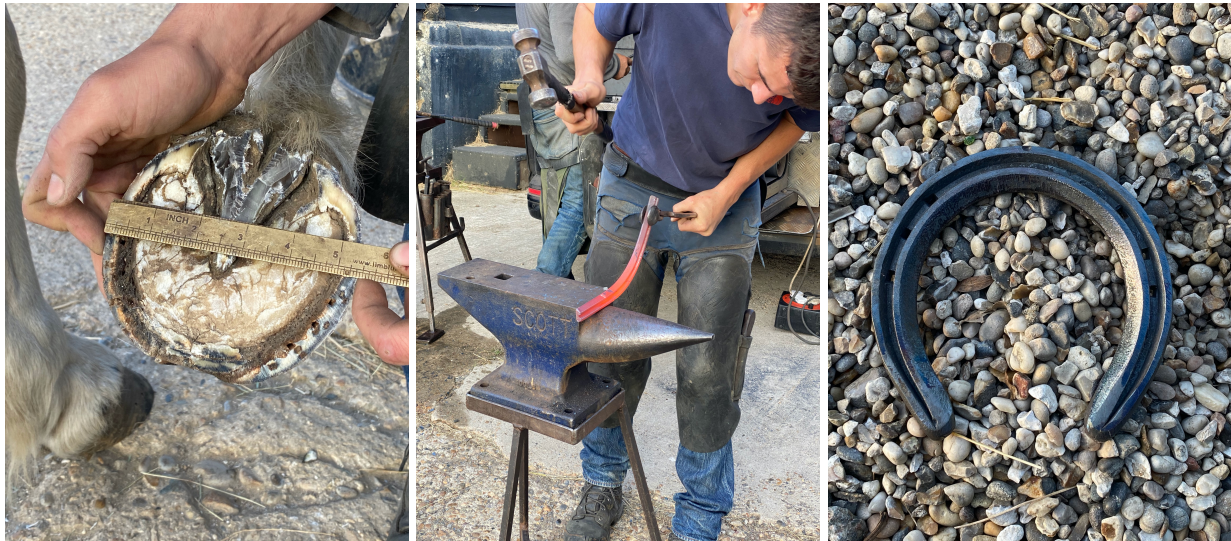


We were able to meet a veterinarian at one yard for a horse that had recently had an MRI of the left distal forelimb. The veterinarian walked me through the MRI findings, and I was able to see him work with Richard to come up with a treatment plan. As the horse had multiple lesions in the palmar aspect of the foot, he was put on a straight bar shoe with a soft pad as well as intraarticular IRAP therapy. In these situations, from the perspective of the veterinarian, it is important to have a good understanding of each patient's individual conformation or history as well as the expectations of the client to provide optimal care. However, it is equally as important to forge a good relationship with farriers and to take their professional opinion into consideration as there may be limitations to what shoeing and trimming treatments are possible for an individual.

At almost every yard, I was given ample opportunity to remove shoes. As I plan to pursue equine medicine, I know that this is a skill that would be important to have practiced. It was helpful to have Richard and Jessee present to help reposition myself with the horse's leg, as I found removing hind

shoes especially difficult. Although I never managed to be as quick as either farrier, by the end of the week, I was able to remove a number of front shoes fairly quickly on my own.

At the end of the week, I learned how to measure a foot to make a custom shoe. Later in the day, we spent some time in the forge where I was able to make my own shoe. With a bit of help, I was able to shape and level the shoe and put in nail holes. We talked about other types of shoes, such as bar shoes and sliders, and how steps in the forging process would differ to make these variations.



Although I had no doubt that this profession was not an easy one, this week gave me a new appreciation for farriers. Not only did I learn practical skills and was fortunate to see a variety of cases, but I also learned that farriery is truly an art and science. I am so grateful to have been placed with farriers who were always happy to teach, whether it be about lesions and conditions or shoe making, and who had such an unwavering passion for the horses they work on. Thank you to Richard and Jessee for having me, as this week has been one of the most fun and informative placements I have been able to experience. I would also like to thank Dr. Lydia Brown and Dr. David Bolt for arranging this placement and for giving me the chance to take part in such an invaluable opportunity.