

EVSA Award 2022 Royal Vet College, University of London

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I was thrilled to receive the 2022 Worshipful Company of Farriers Equine Studies Awards for The Royal Veterinary College. I arranged my week for the March of 2022 and was placed with Adam Young, Master Farrier, and his son Henry Young. I was given a wonderful welcome by the whole family, who were very accommodating to all my needs throughout, for which I am very grateful.

I spent the week accompanying Adam and Henry on their visits to different yards, looking at a variety of feet and gaining an appreciation of the need to take an individual approach to each hoof. I began the week by pulling a shoe, a skill that I had the opportunity to develop throughout the subsequent visits.

On the Monday, we discussed the role of the shoe and how it provides support to all the structures above it. This was exemplified in a horse with navicular disease and a history of suspensory issues. Bar shoes were used to provide support to the navicular and the frog. Another case I witnessed was a thoroughbred mare with a history of going footsore, and being thin soled. This is currently being successfully managed using impression material, with a flexible pad underneath the shoes to provide greater cushioning and protection to the sole.

We also discussed foot balance and how we can look at the worn shoe to assess the animal. Ideally the shoe should be worn evenly, and often the lateral edge of the toe at breakover is worn slightly more.

On Tuesday I witnessed the management of cases of chronic laminitis and the importance of shifting the weight back, which is often achieved with a short toe. The risk of shorter toe, however, is the exposure of distended laminae. To keep this supported, the breakover point is moved more planter or palmar by rounding the toe edge of the shoe, providing protection against any exposed laminae.

A further case I observed on the Wednesday was a horse that the owner believed was lame. On witnessing the movement of the horse, we noticed that left fore was in fact twisting and sinking into the surface. To reduce this motion, we fullered the lateral edge of the shoe.



On the Thursday I had a go at trimming and hot shoeing. I was also able to get involved with widening a crack that had begun to underrun, thus exposing the infection that had established. We applied 'Be Gone', a treatment designed for the management of seedy toe.



I was also able to witness how youngstock begin to be desensitised to the farrier process. The colt was stood with its friends while they were trimmed and shod and took in all the noises and smells. Afterwards we spent time carefully lifting the

yearling's feet and manipulating the leg to get it used to the actions it would need to go through in order to be trimmed.

I spent Friday developing my technique of removing shoes and trimming feet, which I found to be an invaluable experience.

As well as watching some remedial shoeing I also observed the approach to routine shoeing. It was interesting to learn how farriers approach trimming, with the aim for one third of the foot to be the toe, whilst bearing in mind the hoof pastern axis and overall hoof balance. These factors are all considered to ensure even loading across the hoof wall and to allow an appropriate breakover point. Adam hot shoes the feet, allowing each shoe to be fitted precisely to every hoof. I was also shown how to add road pins and stud holes to the shoes. We discussed the benefits and consequences of the use of studs, and the effect of one or two studs being used in each shoe.



Furthermore, we spoke about the importance of the angles at which the nails are driven into the hoof to ensure the sensitive structures are not disturbed.

We also considered the role of toe clips, and how quarter clips are particularly useful in horses that pull their shoes. Moreover, the importance of chamfering the edges of the shoe was discussed, in order to ensure there are no sharp edges that the horse could injure itself with.

I spent some evenings in the forge learning to work with the metal. With some help from Adam, I successfully made a shoe and forged a hoof pick under the careful guidance of Henry. This gave me an appreciation of the skill and craftsmanship required to shape the metal and ensure the equipment is fit for its intended purpose.

In addition to the practical experience I gained across the week, I also spent an evening discussing a variety of clinical cases with both Adam and Henry, learning how they were managed, how they could have been managed and the outcomes.

I very much enjoyed my week, and it was great to be able to go out and meet my future clients, as I have accepted a job in the area. I am hugely grateful to Adam and his family for accommodating me (and providing me with delicious food!), and for WCF for supporting the week. I have gained an even greater appreciation for the knowledge and skill possessed by farriers, particularly through the plentiful opportunities for discussion and hands on experience. I would thoroughly recommend a farriery course to any prospective veterinary professional as it provides a wider knowledge and skillset that complements your clinical understanding.

