

Worshipful Company of Farriers Equine Veterinary Studies Award 2022

Kelsey Cook - University of Surrey.

To be the recipient of the Worshipful Company of Farriers Equine Studies Award 2022 was most definitely the highlight to my final year of vet school. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I was not able to complete the EMS week with a farrier as intended, so the WCF week with Ben in the Cotswolds was very helpful and a great opportunity to learn new skills that I have since adopted in my new career as an equine vet.

Ben was truly fantastic and I am so grateful that the worshipful company of farriers made the introduction allowing me to learn as much as I did. Ben and his associate Ross were so patient with me throughout the week and were really fun to learn with. From the moment I stepped into the forge, I noticed the Rio Olympic flag and the vast array of shoes on display. Ben was one of the lead farriers at both the London 2012 Olympic/Paralympic Games and Rio 2016. It was great to listen to Ben's stories about his time working with the Olympic horses abroad as well as Ross who explained the different shoe types and the competitions that they take part in.

Ben is one of only 17 Master Farriers worldwide and is also a Training Farrier. He carries out farriery lectures to vets, universities and the general public, so he was very good at teaching. Our first client came to the forge and I explained to Ben that I find it difficult sometimes spotting lameness at walk, so he carefully explained what to look for, from stride length, to how the hoof landed and in turn which muscle groups would be affected in doing so - which was hugely beneficial.



They also taught me how to remove a shoe properly and how to better my body position to use less energy and save myself from muscle fatigue. Throughout the week I was able to practise this and remove multiple shoes of differing wear. I didn't realise how much this helped me until I went to a new graduate week where we were tasked to remove a shoe and I was finished far quicker than anyone else in the group! A skill which has very much benefited my new job as an equine vet.

Throughout the week Ben and Ross were great at explaining the variations in the different feet we saw from flat feet to upright, wide or narrow soles and how this influenced their shoeing technique. Ben works for a variety of clients, from professional to the everyday leisure riders. The majority however being sport horses, competing at a high level – either 5*, international or Olympic level. It was interesting to handle the horses and a great opportunity to learn more about their differing disciplines of dressage, showjumpers and eventers and their associated shoeing requirements.

We also did a lot of remedial farrier work. Throughout the week we looked after a number of horses that had numerous performance issues, as well pathologies and lameness issues. He started each examination with a gait analysis, sometimes with the aid of a vet's radiograph, to help to create more symmetrical and balanced movement for each horse.

A highlight of my week was making my own shoe at the forge. Ross was hugely patient with me as I took much longer than him to create the shoe. It really made me appreciate the skill and precision that goes into a farriers' workmanship, not to mention the physical strength behind making the shoe fit each horse differently as well as making it look good.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to Lydia, the Worshipful Company of Farriers and Ben for the amazing opportunity. Lydia was so helpful and brilliant in organising my week with Ben and guiding me through the paperwork after the placement was over. I have gained so much theoretical and practical experience and I am truly grateful to all those involved.

I am lucky enough to say that I have continued to work with Ben in my new job as we have mutual clients and I can't begin to say how helpful it is having such a knowledgeable farrier as part of my 'new graduate armoury'. He has already helped me in multiple difficult laminitis cases. I highly recommend this award, especially if you can complete it with a farrier in a part of the country that you wish to work in the future.

Kelsey Cook

*Final year student – now New Graduate Equine vet
University of Surrey*

