

EVSA Report, 2019: Ruben Morris-Brown, 4th Year, University of Edinburgh

The Equine Veterinary Studies Award (EVSA), provided by the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF), gave myself, as well as a student from each of the other Veterinary Universities, the priceless opportunity of experiencing a whole week with an appointed farrier. I was lucky enough to be able to work with Marc Jerram, BSc Hons AWCF Master Farrier, who was amazing at discussing cases we saw throughout the week, and getting me involved.

As I am passionate to go into Equine after graduation, and after seeing placement with vets, I was aware of the importance of the work farriers do. Something I have seen to be vital in practice is the relationship between vets and farriers. This was further strengthened during my placement with Marc, as he discussed with me cases he had referred to him from vets, and vice versa. I hope to be able to build similar relationships with farriers in my area once I am a practicing vet, as well as Marc kindly offering to be a sounding board if I ever needed help in the future.

While at University we have lectures both by clinicians and our resident farriers on conditions of the equine foot, nothing beats being able to see the scenarios in practice. I was incredibly lucky in this week, as Marc had several interesting cases to show me. He is also excellent at recording the progress of cases on his Facebook page. This allowed me to not only see the improvements the horses have made, but also see the original findings such as X-ray images.

In a previous year of our course we are given an afternoon to practice removing shoes from Blacksmith Buddy. While this was an amazing experience, it definitely didn't compare to the real thing. Marc was excellent at talking me through the stages of removing a shoe, showing me the ideal technique. While it definitely took me a while to get the hang of it, Marc was encouraging all the way – Giving me tips on how to change my technique, and taking over if needed. While the first day I was removing shoes was a struggle, the next day I was able to proceed quickly and it felt much more natural. As a first day competency I know that this ability will be invaluable going into my final year at University and then into my career, and I couldn't have asked for a better way to gain confidence in it.

Once I returned to Edinburgh after Easter I had to remove one of our Exmoor's shoes. Not only was I able to do this completely unaided, I was confident enough to talk through the process with a younger student.



As well as going over the removal and application of shoes on some of Marc's less challenging clients, he also had several that had various issues he was tackling.

Our first call was a relatively simple fix – While the mare was used for hunting throughout the season, she also has low heels. We discussed balancing the requirements between having enough length to give heel

support, but not too much that will risk her pulling a shoe on a hunt. As the season had ended, Marc demonstrated to me the increased length of the shoe that will provide the support through summer.

The next horse we saw suffered for a forelimb fetlock valgus (lateral deviation), leading to the lateral aspect of the hoof to be raised and the medial collapsed. Marc explained to me how the primary lateral contact with the ground then leads to secondary compression of the medial aspect on loading. He showed me how they bevel the lateral side of the shoe, and give medial extension; Supporting the aspect of the foot that is carrying the most weight. He also explained how he placed 3 nails in the lateral side of the shoe, but only 2 in the medial, as this side they were wanting to allow expansion.



At the same yard we also saw a gelding with a foot abscess. Although the owner suspected this was the case, we were able to use hoof testers to locate and then rupture the abscess and the relief the pony experienced was immediate. Marc made the suggestion of a copper lick to prevent further cases, after this I have visited several yards that also use them for abscess prevention.

At one yard Marc took the time to draw on the hoof of one mare all the various lengths and angles in the foot that are required when assessing balance, hoof dimensions and shoeing. This was a great chance for me to be able to visually appreciate all the aspects he was describing while shaping the hoof and shoes in the previous horses.



I was also lucky enough to accompany

Marc on a CPD evening hosted by one of the area vets on their latest MRI installation. This was a great evening to be a part of, they started by talking about some techniques we had recently gone over at University, such as nerve blocks. They later went on to discuss using MRI in several cases, a couple of which were similar to ones Marc and I had seen and discussed in the previous few days. This was a great way to see how Vets and Farriers jobs interact, and how progress in diagnostic techniques are occurring in the field.



Again, I would like to say how much I truly enjoyed my week spent with Marc. I don't think I've had another placement where the host tried as hard to explain all the processes and steps occurring throughout each case. I honestly learnt so much, and it's something I have already strongly recommended my friends in the years below to apply for. I'd like to thank Marc and Dr Lydia Brown for arranging the week, it provided me with invaluable skills and was a week I won't forget.