

## Worshipful Company of Farriers: Equine Veterinary Studies Award 2019 Francesca Wood – University of Glasgow

As someone who has always been very keen to pursue a career in equine veterinary medicine, I was very happy when I heard I had been selected as the nominee for Glasgow University's Equine Veterinary Studies Award and would be spending a week with a master farrier learning shoeing principals and how to use farrier tools correctly. The award is an annual one which is offered by the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF) to veterinary students from each of the vet schools across the U.K. I knew this would be an excellent opportunity to expand my knowledge of routine farriery and become better equipped at the practical aspects of dealing with equine feet.

I was placed with Sarah Brown (FWCF) and Steven Beane (FWCF) in North Yorkshire. I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to them both – they immediately made me feel so welcome, and were excellent, patient teachers when explaining concepts and demoing techniques to me. I'd also like to thank their apprentices Dom and Jake who also made me feel very welcome and helped me out with much appreciated tips throughout the week.

On the first day at one of the livery yards Sarah routinely shoes at, she ran through the best techniques for the removal of a shoe. This is a skill that I was very keen to get better at as it's an essential "Day One" skill for newly graduated equine vets, but can be hard to get to practice it at vet school. I had previously only removed one shoe beforehand while on university rotations and I can't say it was the picture of speed and skill, so I was well aware just how easy farriers make taking shoes off. She showed me how to stand to make the horse comfortable as possible, and after just one shoe removal I felt more familiar with all the tools and the best technique to get a shoe off safely and quickly (Figure 1). A further skill I was very keen to get my head around was how to properly hold and use different hoof knives. Sarah very helpfully went through how to hold and use each type of knife safely. I also got to have a go at prepping feet, from cleaning them and assessing the bars of the foot and then trimming away excess sole and growth around seat of corn, and finally giving the frog clefts a trim.



Figure 1: Taking off shoes

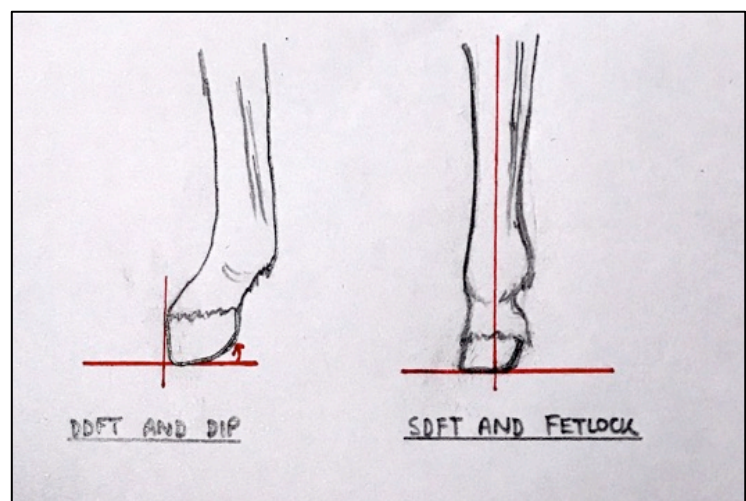


Figure 2: Sketch Showing Tendon Contracture and Affected Joints

It was really beneficial to be able to discuss the different farriery techniques that can be used for different foot and limb pathologies, particularly as I hadn't had much prior experience with the

exact foot trimming and shoeing that can be used to correct flexural and angular limb deformities. Sarah went through the different ways contracture of the tendons can alter the limb's conformation – for example, contracture of the deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) affecting the distal interphalangeal joint (DIP) in comparison to the superficial digital flexor tendon (SDFT) causing contracture at the level of the fetlock (Figure 2).

I was able to see a real mix of breeds throughout the week, from competition ponies to Clydesdales and dressage warmbloods to race thoroughbreds. It was very interesting to see how versatile farriers have to be when trimming and shoeing different breeds, whilst still allowing the foot to take a shape natural to the breed. We also attended a case with a hospital plate fitted (Figure 3). I had previously only seen one used for recovery post keratoma removal surgery, so it was nice to be able to see the versatility of this type of shoe. This specific horse had a severe chronic abscess which had meant that a lot of sole had needed to be pared away. The foot had been packed with 'sugardine' and was now due a check-up. Comparing before and after pictures, it was amazing how well the foot was doing and really showed how critical a strong working relationship is between farriers and vets.

One of the highlights of the week was having a go at making my own shoe (Figure 4). I really enjoyed learning the whole process and have so much respect for how easy farriers make it look. Sarah showed me how to heat and shape the shoe in order to get a custom fit for each horse and then punch in the nail holes. I was really happy with the end result (and the fact that I managed to avoid whacking my fingers with the hammer).



Figure 3: Hospital Plate



Figure 4: Making a Shoe

This experience was an invaluable one which really helped me gain a deeper understanding of farriery and improve my practical skills. A very big thank you to the WCF and Dr Lydia Brown for providing and coordinating this excellent award scheme.