

This past week spent with Rob Rush & Co. has been an incredible learning experience, one that I feel very grateful to have had the opportunity, thanks to the Worshipful Company of Farriers. I have thoroughly enjoyed furthering my knowledge of the farriery profession and especially of remedial shoeing, an area that I have a particular interest in. What I have learnt this week about foot balance, lameness and remedial farriery will no doubt be of great aid when I enter the veterinary profession.

Shoe making

From the first day I was introduced to the forge. I have never had exposure to this type of labour and to my surprise I really enjoyed this aspect of farriery! With great patience of the associate farriers, I was able to successfully craft two shoes, one front and one hind, for the first time in my life! Forging the shoes gave me a deeper understanding of the theory behind farriery, the differences in each shoe and an appreciation of the great skill and knowledge that farriers possess; in order to create what seems like such a simple device but which has the power to change the whole mechanics of an animal.



Shoeing

I was fortunate enough to place imprint and aluminium heart bar shoes on laminitic cases whilst working at Red Wings with the farriers. This was a brilliant opportunity to practice first-hand the work that I had seen previously and truly understand the benefits of each type of shoe and when it is appropriate to use each one. I was also shown the results of remedial shoeing through seeing before pictures of a lot of cases that I saw this week. A case that stayed with me in particular was a horse who had appeared at Red Wings after a severe case of laminitis in which the distal phalanx had rotated severely and perforated the sole. With the help of remedial farriery this horse was now able to walk when otherwise this could have resulted in euthanasia. The knowledge I have gained from this experience will be very helpful when deciding the best therapeutic plan for my patients and will allow me to have a greater depth of discussion with the farriers I will be working with.

Furthermore, it was very beneficial to have practiced taking shoes off under the guidance of a farrier as I was advised how to appropriately position myself under the horse so that I was able to take up the clenches and pull the nails most effectively. This is a task that I will routinely be performing when searching for foot abscesses or removing shoes before operations.



Searching the foot

Previously, in my studies I have seen vets search for abscess with their quitters and left rather large holes which has caused some tension with the farriers. Hence, I was very happy to have been taught during this week to search for abscesses and to know when to stop and when to ask for further advice from your farrier. I was also fortunate to have seen a few cases of seedy toe on Donkeys. I do not have a lot of exposure to Donkeys, so it was interesting to learn about the difference in HPA, hoof pathologies and foot shape in comparison to horses.



I have truly developed a deep appreciation of the skills and knowledge of farriers and I am very grateful to Rob & Co. for their patience and generosity whilst teaching me this past week. I would also like to thank Dr Lydia Brown and the Worshipful Company for providing me with this outstanding opportunity that I hope will allow me to make a greater difference to the horses under my care in the future.

Madi Hewitson

BVMedSci (hons)

Final Year Veterinary Medicine Student, The University of Nottingham