

The Equine Veterinary Studies Award (EVSA)

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Introduction

The Equine Veterinary Studies Award (EVSA) is run by the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF) who offer one vet student at each of the eight UK vet schools the opportunity to work with a host farrier for a week to experience farriery and corrective shoeing. The university chooses the student (normally a fourth year) and the WCF pays for accommodation, travel and associated expenses. Farriers are selected from around the country by the WCF and are host to a veterinary student for a week of hands on work experience, lectures and tutorials. Below is a brief summary of the events of the week where I was host to Royal Dick (Edinburgh) university student Ruben Morris-Brown.

Monday

The week began with an introduction to my farriery business serving horses in Staffordshire and Shropshire. The first appointment involved shoeing a hunt horse that had experienced bruised soles on both front feet from the ground becoming increasingly firm. We then travelled to a dressage yard to work on a number of horses with conformational faults such as fetlock valgus and broken back hoof pastern axis. A horse with low weak heels was shod with pads and impression material to provide sole arch support (Fig.1) Each horse was carefully assessed both static and dynamically before a farriery plan was developed to address these issues. At the next appointment a Connemara pony was shod whose coronary band had been suffering a severe infection from a blackthorn when jumping cross country. Finally, we attended two horses to be shod, one of which had previously suffered from manica flexoria strain on the hindlimb and another that was diagnosed with navicular at age four but with careful management is still in light work 27 years later!



Fig.1

Tuesday

The day began with shoeing a flat racehorse with aluminium plates, explaining the type of fit required for the horse to work at speed whilst retaining the shoes and reducing the risk of interfering injury. Following that we shod a number of horses at a livery yard where I was able to demonstrate hoof mapping techniques to help locate internal hoof structures using external reference points. There was also a chance for the student to begin practising removing shoes which

is a skill they will need to develop for emergency callouts (Fig. 2). One of the horses was shod using wedged frog support pads having had a previous deep digital flexor tendon injury, this allowed for a discussion of where and when wedging the hoof is appropriate and when to avoid it altogether. On the evening, we attended an MRI lecture evening hosted by Fyrnwy Equine clinic near Whitchurch. This was a very informative evening describing the diagnostic methods now available and how this data is interpreted.



Fig. 2

Wednesday

The first appointment of the day involved shoeing a horse suffering from a grass crack, this gave me chance to explain the different types of hoof wall cracks and how they are treated differently. The next call was at a riding school where the student had a chance to practice further with removing shoes on a number of horses, showing increased competency from the day before. I then performed a shoemaking demonstration (Fig. 3) for one of the school horses which gave the student an insight into the training system and what we are expected to produce at colleges as apprentices. The following appointment was to a horse that has been recovering from knee surgery having had some bone fragments removed. This resulted in an asymmetry of the front feet due to abnormal loading of one hoof and unloading of the contra lateral hoof. This was a good lesson on the biomechanical effects that some conditions can have on the hoof.

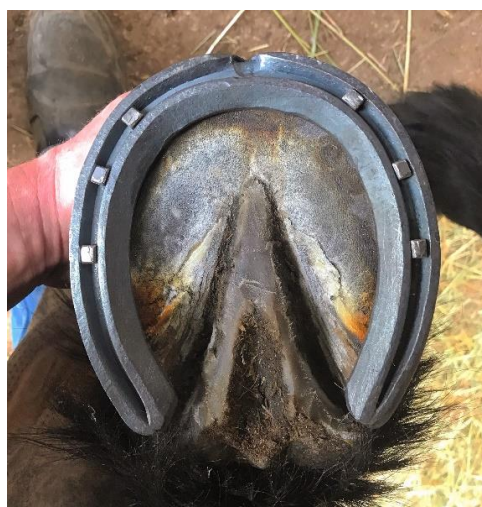


Fig. 3

Thursday

The first horse of the day was a horse that had been diagnosed with arthritic changes in the hock, the case was discussed and a lateral support shoe fitted to compensate for the horse's movement. The next appointment allowed for more shoe removal practice with the student now becoming confident and efficient in the process. There was also a chance to discuss various limb pathologies and test the student on their locations on the horse, the acquired gait and the veterinary/farriery treatment of these. The final visit of the day involved working on a horse that has shivers on the off hind, this gave a good example of where careful handling of horses with involuntary reactions is vital. The other horse there was suffering from a stifle injury and whilst being barefoot had severely dragged and squared off the toes of the hind feet. This horse was shod with a set toe to protect the area and aid in fluid locomotion. This helped the student to understand how the variants we apply to shoes can make a big difference.

Friday

The day consisted mainly of routine farriery for my regular clients, I was able to give a demonstration on how to remove a newly shod shoe using nail pullers which will be beneficial should the student get called out in the future to a newly shod horse experiencing lameness. The student then competently replicated the process when she had a go herself. Later that day we attended a call with a pony that had been suffering from laminitis, going through the immediate first aid procedures, the radiography and diagnostics required, the owner's guidelines and the farriery protocols required. There was also a horse there suffering from a rare case of coronitis and is now in the recovery phase, this was a good case to demonstrate as they are usually quite rare and the after care and medication was discussed. Finally, we attended a hackney carriage horse that had suddenly gone lame, a thorough foot examination revealed an abscess in the centre of the sole possibly caused by a puncture wound. The poultice and after care procedures were described to the student and the role that a veterinary surgeon will play in recovery.

Summary

This week was highly informative hands on week for the student who stated that she thoroughly enjoyed the week and learned an incredible amount. A number of conditions were experienced such as bruised soles, coronary band infections, manica flexoria strains, navicular, abscesses, deep digital flexor tendon injuries, wall cracks, hock/stifle injuries, laminitis, coronitis and many other common conformational faults. The farriery protocols were described for each along with advice on how to work alongside farriers and horse owners. The student is also now proficient at removing shoes and will have a real "edge" over her fellow students when it comes hoof care and can use the experiences from this week throughout her career.