

I was delighted to have been awarded the 2024 Worshipful Company of Farriers Equine Veterinary Studies Award. I was fortunate enough to have been placed with Ben Benson AWCF and his exceptional team in Banbury, just outside Oxford. Ben is an highly accomplished farrier, having done a plethora of work ,including serving as the lead farrier for the Olympic games in London 2012 and Rio 2016. His vast knowledge and outstanding teaching skills made this experience incredibly valuable.

Having grown up with horses and done previous work experience with my uncle who is a farrier I have always had an appreciation of the importance of farriery in the equine industry. I wanted to further expand my knowledge of the field so that when I graduate, I am able to collaborate with farriers and optimise the outcome of my orthopaedic lameness workup cases.

Ben specialises in remedial and performance farriery and covers a wide range of disciplines. He introduced me into the concept that tailoring the shoes to fit the pathology can completely alter the course of the disease process – showing me that farriery is a medicine in itself. The majority of lameness ailments can be prevented or massively reduced by taking the time to look at the horse holistically, considering its conformation, its current work and environment, and formulating a personalised fit for the individual horse's needs.

By working alongside vets, physiotherapists and other health care professionals he is able to optimise the long-term outcome for his patients.

Over the course of the week we used a variety of different techniques to assess the patients; this included static and dynamic evaluation, analysis of X-rays and scans taken by vets and Hoofbeat Gait analysis. This was my first experience using Hoofbeat Gait analysis, which is a gait analysis software which allows for the foot to be visualise the horse's foot during flight and measure the duration down to milliseconds. This software allows the farrier to see if by tweaking the shoeing we can help the horse become more balanced and in turn, better to ride. Furthermore, it allows for comparison of the gait throughout the treatment course as previous videos can be stored and compared to more current views.

One of the most invaluable things I learnt during the week was the ability to assess foot balance. We started by viewing the horse from a distance to assess its conformation, then performing a dynamic lameness examination to assess gait analysis. We then moved on to the hands-on assessment where we palpated the entirety of the horse's skeletal system, not just its feet. Then by lifting up the horse leg and viewing the sole of the foot we could determine medio-lateral foot balance. Ben used the analogy of comparing the foot to a 'dish of water': by imaging if the hoof was filled with water and thinking where the water would spill out of the hoof first, we can determine which is the lowest point of the sole and thus the source of the imbalance. This revolutionised the way I think about foot balance assessment and is something I will incorporate into my veterinary orthopaedic assessment.





The highlight of my week was having the opportunity to forge shoes. Although my shoes were not functional (as I wasn't very good), I had a great time having a go and it gave me a great appreciation for both the physical effort and meticulous planning that goes into making shoes.

I am so grateful to Ben and his fantastic team who made me feel really welcome, answered all my silly questions and taught me loads! I would also like to say a huge thank you to the Worshipful Company of Farriers for providing me with this amazing opportunity.