



Three Months in America – Could it be You?

If you are a UK student just beginning your penultimate or final year as an undergraduate, why not apply for the incredible opportunity of a three month internship to Virginia Tech?

The shortlisted students who have written the best 3,000 word paper focusing upon the advancement of the horse sector in the UK, or the improvement of the health and welfare of equines, will be invited to the final interview day with Professor Graham Suggett and Karen Spinner, Managing Editor of Horse & Hound. The lucky winner will be off to the USA for up to three months between May and September 2014, where their destination will be the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center (MAREC). The winner will:

- Actively participate in research related to reproduction, nutrition, genetics, behaviour or the management of horses
- Work with over 50 horses
- Learn about reproductive management and foaling
- Show young stock at regional sport horse shows (in-hand)
- Travel to regional breeding farms and events
- Network with leading owners, riders and trainers

Winner of the 2013 competition, Georgina Scarlett, a final year BSc Equine Studies student from Sparsholt College and the University of Portsmouth, was selected on the basis of her paper investigating the control of equine welfare matters in Ireland and the strength of her live online interview which was conducted between the British Equestrian Federation (BEF) headquarters in Warwickshire and the MAREC in the USA. Upon her return to the UK Georgina commented, “My time at the MAREC was amazing! I learnt so much especially with regard to the breeding aspect of the equine industry. My favourite part of the experience was taking one of the foals to Dressage at Lexington and presenting many of the foals at inspection. The experience was quite easily life changing, I learnt not only more about the equine industry and equine management but also about myself! It was an incredible three months with great people and fantastic horses!”

James Rayner, winner of the 2012 Internship competition, has just returned to Virginia to begin his Masters, which he is completing via distance learning with the University of Edinburgh and says “My time at MAREC during the summer of 2012 helped me in many ways. I developed my practical, scientific and research skills by being able to put my undergraduate experience into practice as well as deciding I wanted to do a Masters course, and having the opportunity to return to do this is incredible. I am back here in Virginia again now and thoroughly committed to my studies, developing my skills in nutrition, reproduction and genetics in such a fantastic location!”

The inaugural winner from 2011, Shannon Willmott, is mid-way through her Masters at The University of Aberystwyth, looking into genetic diversity in modern native British and Irish horse and pony breeds.

Associate Professor of Equine Science at Virginia Tech, Dr. Rebecca K. Splan will be the winner’s supervisor. Dr Splan’s current research interests include metabolic imprinting and the genetic improvement of performance horses. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the equine area and spearheads the innovative undergraduate equine studies program and sport horse breeding program at the MAREC.

To find out more about the 2014 Internship, and to apply, visit the British Equestrian Federation’s Researching Equines Database (BEFRED) at www.befred.org.

Photographs

BEF 1 and BEF 2 are Georgina Scarlett, with the 1994 Hanoverian mare Dom Perignon (Domingo x Closet Dancer xx, Noble Dancer xx).

BEF 3 includes the Virginia Tech interns at their first breed show. L to R: Qabernet VT (Qredit x Dom Perignon, Domingo) with Melanie Peabody, Dom Perignon (Domingo x Closet Dancer xx, Noble Dancer xx) with Cara Barskey and Caitlin Cleaver, Baltic Queen of Spades (LA Baltic Inspiration x Mitchs Promise xx, Double Line xx) with Erin Donlon and Georgina Scarlett. Photo courtesy of WNCPhoto.com.

Further information

Dr. Rebecca K Splan completed her bachelor’s degree at Michigan State University (1994), her master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (1996 and 1999, respectively), and has worked as a research associate at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

Virginia Tech www.vt.edu MAREC www.arec.vaes.vt.edu/middleburg

The British Equestrian Federation seeks to improve the links between research establishments, academic establishments and the equestrian industry www.bef.co.uk/Equine_Research

BEF’s Researching Equines Database, BEFRED www.befred.org

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