



Three Months in America – Could it be You?

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

The students who have written the best 3,000 word paper based on a piece of research focusing upon the development 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 and Hound. The lucky winner will be off to the USA for up to three months. Their destination will be the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center (MAREC), between May and September 2012. The winner will have the opportunity to:

- 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

Last year's winner Shannon Willmott, a second year BSc Equine Science student from the University of Lincoln, was selected on the basis of her paper on Nitrate and Nitrite Poisoning in Horses and its Possible Growing Welfare Risk to the UK, and the strength of her online interview which was conducted between the BEF headquarters in Warwickshire and Virginia Tech in the USA. Said Shannon, "there were so many highlights in my trip, from helping with foaling, to learning to AI mares, to preparing and presenting horses for showing". Shannon added "the most rewarding part was being given the responsibility of looking after a research project to measure progesterone and cytokine levels in mares. I have also made some great friends amongst the other students at Virginia Tech. I'm only sorry it's over!"

Following her interview, Helene Todd, close runner up in the 2011 competition volunteered to assist with the BEF Futurity evaluations during July and August and said “I was encouraged to apply by my lecturer, Mark Sanderson. The whole internship process has been purely positive, and has given me experiences which I hope to put to use in my working life at home and with the heavy horse breeding and training I am currently involved with. It has also inspired me for the future. Writing for the evaluators at the BEF Futurity was an amazing experience, I learned so much, and it was fantastic fun!”

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 2012 Internship, and to apply, visit the British Equestrian Federation’s Researching Equines Database (BEFRED) at www.befred.org.

Photographs (see below)

Shannon Wilmott at Virginia Dressage Association Summer Breed Show. Image courtesy www.picsforyou.com.

Helene Todd at home on the farm with some youngstock.

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 Futurity www.britishbreeding.org

BEF’s Researching Equines Database www.befred.org

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Shannon Wilmott at Virginia Dressage Association Summer Breed Show. Image courtesy www.picsforyou.com.



Helene Todd at home on the farm with some youngstock.

