



## 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 a three month internship to Virginia Tech?

The students who have written the best 3,000 word paper 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 & Hound. The lucky winner will be off to the USA for up to three months between May and September 2013, where their destination will be the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center (MAREC). 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

Winner of the 2012 competition, James Rayner, a final year BSc Equine Sports Science student from the University of Lincoln, was selected on the basis of his paper and the strength of his online interview which was conducted between the BEF headquarters in Warwickshire and the MAREC in the USA. Upon his return to the UK James commented, “I enjoyed every day of my time at the MAREC. I did so many great things including showing the youngstock in-hand, getting involved in research projects, taking part in lectures given by Dr Splan and Dr Porr, and attending gradings. One of the best things was being able to put the theory I had learned during my degree into practice. My experience has also helped me to decide where I want to take my career next within the equine industry, and in particular the breeding side of the sector, and I will shortly apply for a Master’s programme. I also hope to return to the MAREC soon. I loved my time in America!”

Shannon Willmott, winner of the 2011 Internship competition, has just started the MSc Equine Science at Aberystwyth University. She has been awarded the IBERS (Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences) West Wales Masonic Lodge Scholarship to help support her studies. Shannon says “My time at MAREC during the summer of 2011 helped me in many ways. I decided I wanted to do a Master’s course, and am considering pursuing a PhD once my MSc is complete. I believe my experience in Virginia greatly contributed to me being awarded the Mason’s Scholarship, as well as opening my eyes to what I could go on to do after my undergraduate degree, particularly in relation to research”.

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 2013 Internship, and to apply, visit the British Equestrian Federation’s Researching Equines Database (BEFRED) at [www.befred.org](http://www.befred.org).

### **Photographs**

James Rayner at Dressage at Lexington. Image courtesy of [www.picsforyou.com](http://www.picsforyou.com).

James Rayner and foal. Image courtesy of Annie Laib.

Shannon Willmott at Virginia Dressage Association Summer Breed Show. Image courtesy [www.picsforyou.com](http://www.picsforyou.com).

High res pictures are also available.

### **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](http://www.vt.edu)

MAREC [www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/middleburg](http://www.ares.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](http://www.bef.co.uk/Equine_Research)

BEF’s Researching Equines Database, BEFRED [www.befred.org](http://www.befred.org)

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