



# Learning by Doing

*Interns get hands-on experience*

An old-time Kentucky expression sums up the essence of farm chores: “working from ‘can see’ to ‘can’t see.’” The research interns at Kentucky Equine Research know the meaning of this concept, as they are almost always the first staff members to arrive at the research farm each morning. In addition, they sometimes have late-night duties, especially when a study requires the collection of blood samples at intervals throughout a 24-hour period.

The KER internship program is offered as either a year-long opportunity or a three-month summer term. Applicants must have completed several years of a college program in equine science or a closely related field. They also should be comfortable and confident in handling Thoroughbreds. Finally, interns need to be serious about protocol and data collection, as their duties encompass not just daily horse care but the actual procedures involved in a nutrition or exercise physiology trial.

Two of KER’s year-long interns, Ariane Wehrmaker and Sarah Acornley, are nearing the end of their stay, while a third intern, Natasha Stonely, completed her duties a few months ago. Summer interns Abby Scherer-Hoock and Lynn Pezzanite have just arrived and are still getting to know the horses and the routine. All agree that, while there’s plenty of work to be done, the internship offers unique learning opportunities. In a region that’s considered the heart of the U.S. horse industry, there’s also some time for exploration and fun.

A member of the polo team and a pre-veterinary student at Purdue University, Lynn applied to the summer program because she wanted to gain firsthand experience with research. She found out about the intern program by talking to her professors. “KER has a great reputation in the industry, so I was interested in spending a summer working here,” she said. “I’ve just been here a week, and already I’ve drawn blood and done pH and fecal testing. It’s been great so far!” Lynn would like to go to veterinary



PHOTOGRAPHS  
CATHERINE BISHOP

Top: Lynn and Sarah check on knees and tendons. The interns are responsible for making sure the research horses stay sound and healthy.

Bottom: Ariane adjusts a grazing muzzle and fly mask.



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CATHERINE BISHOP

As interns, Abby Scherer-Hoock, Lynn Pezzanite, Ariane Wehrmaker, and Sarah Acornley are responsible for the daily care of the horses at KER as well as important aspects of in-house research.

school and eventually have a large-animal practice, so interning at KER is a foretaste of a future devoted to caring for horses.

A Massachusetts resident, Abby attends the University of Vermont where she is studying animal science. She has several years of riding experience and is the owner of a Miniature mare. She said, “The job has met my expectations. I knew we’d be doing barn chores, but I’m glad we’re also getting right into data collection.” After earning a bachelor’s degree, Abby would like to continue her studies, maybe working toward a master’s degree in equine nutrition.

Ariane, who is from Heidelberg, Germany, is using the intern program to fulfill a graduation requirement for a bachelor’s degree

in equine science from the University of Veterinary Medicine and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna, Austria. Commenting on her job at KER, she said, “I have a strong interest in nutrition, so participating in nutrition research has been interesting. I’ve also learned to do hands-on techniques like taking blood, spinning it and doing separations, and placing catheters. Interpreting x-rays for a bone density study is another new thing I’ve learned.” A lifelong rider and horse enthusiast, she has made good use of the resources in Kentucky during her off-duty hours. “Earlier this spring, I did three months of weekend foal-watching at a farm with over 100 broodmares,” she said. “I did the same thing at home, but there were fewer mares. Here, I actually got to see sev-



PHOTOGRAPH  
ABBY SCHERER-HOOCK

Above: Drawing blood to determine plasma levels of various nutrients is an important duty for the KER interns.

PHOTOGRAPH  
CATHERINE BISHOP

Right: Abby holds Flash while Lynn positions a heart monitor.



Equine science students who are interested in applying for an intern position with KER can go to [www.ker.com](http://www.ker.com) and click on "About KER." Clicking on "Career Opportunities" will lead to a page with qualifications, position details, and information about contacting Kentucky Equine Research.

eral births." She has also gone on tours of top Thoroughbred farms, visited veterinary hospitals, attended lectures on equine topics at the University of Kentucky, and participated in KER's nutrition conference. Ariane's favorite horses at KER are Irish ("He has a great personality!"), Marvin ("He's cute and very sweet."), and Lewey ("This horse can be a little bit naughty!"). After her year at KER, Ariane plans to work toward an advanced degree in nutrition.

Natasha hails from near London, England. Before coming to KER, she worked on stud farms in England and France. Growing up in a family of riders, she owned two show jumpers. Natasha heard about the intern program while she was earning an animal science degree with an equine focus at the University of Plymouth.

"This is a good learning opportunity," she commented. "It's interesting to see what goes on behind a research project. This is valuable experience if you're considering a career in research or nutrition." Natasha especially enjoyed working with the young horses, taking care of them and helping them learn how to run on the high-speed treadmill. After finishing at

KER and then spending the spring and summer at a stud farm helping with the foaling and breeding seasons, she might work for a while. Her plans may eventually include pursuing an advanced degree in animal nutrition.

Another rider from an early age, Sarah came to KER from the Open College of Equine Studies in Newmarket, England where she is enrolled in an equine studies program. At her home in Pretoria, South Africa, Sarah owned a show jumper. She is enthusiastic about what the year in Kentucky has offered. "I've learned so many things," she said. "Serum analysis, exercising all the horses on the treadmill, drawing blood...but riding the young horses has been the most fun. Bob is my favorite; I did all the early work with him when we started him under saddle, and he and I sort of have the same type of personality!" After her year as an intern, Sarah will stay at KER to take on the responsibility of supervising the new class of interns, helping them learn the schedule and making sure that horse management and research procedures are carried out properly. 🐾