

KER Internship Offers Learning and New Experiences

"The worst part of the job? That would be the time I had to start my day at 4:00 in the morning, drawing blood for a 24-hour collection. The weather was freezing, and I was so cold!" Katrina Park shuddered at the memory, but her smile returned quickly when she recalled the more enjoyable and educational things she's experienced in her year as a research intern at Kentucky Equine Research (KER).

"What else have I done?" mused the native of Lincolnshire, England. "Feeding, grooming, and caring for the research horses, of course. I've also helped the nutritionists prepare their presentations, and written some marketing materials for a new Team Member in Portugal, and participated in feed analysis by researching similar feeds and doing some data entry."

"Oh, and I wrote a paper on hospital diets," she continued. "I spent some time at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington finding out about feed management of hospitalized horses. I determined that there may be a need for a specialized product, possibly something that could be fed in different forms—dry, soaked, cubed, or whatever—to meet the needs of sick and recovering animals."

She paused, and then said in surprise, "My goodness... I've done a lot, haven't I?"

Any university student or recent graduate of an equine studies program who wants to gain experience in equine nutrition studies may apply to spend a year as a research intern at KER. The work is physical—interns participate in hands-on horse care and barn work—as well as intellectual.

Sharon Warner is enthusiastic about this latter part of her stint in Kentucky. "I enjoyed my time at college," she said, "but some of the teaching was too traditional and narrow-minded for my way of thinking." Discussing research ideas with her instructors, Sharon was frustrated time after time as she encountered a discouraging "that can't be done" attitude. Being at KER and participating in all phases of a research project, from the design through data collection and reduction and on to the conclusion and application, has been an eye-opening opportunity, she said. "My experience at KER has given me a better understanding of what's feasible and how to structure it."

When her internship is finished, Sharon would like to study zoopharmacognosy, a field that looks at how animals select and use plants, seeds, and insects to prevent and treat disease. "I'd like to travel the world, educating and




Catherine Bishop

As research interns, Katrina Park, Sharon Warner, and Jade Clifford provide important contributions to scientific studies conducted at KER. In addition, they assist with the day-to-day chores associated with caring for a herd of closely monitored horses.

inspiring other people to question things, not just to accept what they have been taught," she said.

Australian-born intern Jade Clifford shares the enthusiasm of the other interns, although that wasn't always the case. "When I found out I'd been accepted, I actually was a little apprehensive about coming to Kentucky," she said. "Now, I don't want to leave. If there were any way I could stay longer, I'd do it! I've learned so much, not just about the horses and research, but also about the wide range of career opportunities in the equine field. Working with Dr. Stephanie Valberg (one of the top researchers in the field of equine exercise physiology) when she came here was a privilege, and I'm looking forward to meeting more industry leaders at KER's spring conference."

Jade echoed a sentiment expressed by her peers. "Besides learning more about research, being an intern has helped me grow personally. I've gotten more independent and learned how much I can actually do by myself. Some of the work has been hard, but I've enjoyed being outside and working with the horses. I would encourage anyone to try this experience!" 



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