

# Train like a vet

Innovative new workshops from the team at XLEquine mean you can now learn horse care skills direct from a vet! YH editor Imogen Johnson liked the sound of this exciting new way to train so much that she went along to try one out - and here's why you should too

It's not often you get to spend the whole day with your equine vet, picking their brain for tips and advice and getting one-to-one practical tuition. That's why the launch of EquineSkills, from vet group XLEquine, will come as a welcome surprise for horse owners and riders all over the UK. These dedicated courses deliver practical training and theory for a reasonable £60 to help you gain confidence in some of the most important areas of horse care.

Intrigued I went along to the first EquineSkills Foot Care course at the Bishopton Veterinary Group in North Yorkshire, where the menu included:

- Understanding the normal anatomy of the hoof and surrounding structures, and how

this relates to your horse

- Learning to spot basic diseases of the foot
- Understanding what you can do to keep your horse's feet healthy
- Recognising the different types of shoes available and when they should be used
- Practising basic procedures such as applying a poultice and removing a shoe

So whatever your level of knowledge here's why I think everyone should enrol for some specialised vet tuition - XL style!

## Discovering a new way to learn

I'm so lucky in my job as Your Horse editor because I regularly get to speak to and learn from experts in all things equine. However,

as I recently discovered, it's not until you're really challenged to use your brain and put your skills to the test that you discover where your knowledge is lacking.

I've owned horses for over 20 years, worked my way through the Pony Club when I was a child and have since topped up my knowledge with real-life experience and by reading and attending various talks and seminars.

I felt pretty confident heading to my first XLEquine Foot Care skills workshop earlier this month, but just 15 minutes in and I suddenly came back down to earth with a bump. Apparently there's a lot I've forgotten since my Pony Club years! Turn over to discover how my day panned out.



The new EquineSkills training initiative has transformed classroom learning for good



A bit of horsey bingo got us off to a flying start

### Getting to know you

My EquineSkills workshop began with an introduction to my expert vet coach for the day, Richard Sutcliffe, who opened the course with a fun game of 'people bingo' - a chance to meet my fellow course-goers and learn more about them.

All we had to do was find other people in the group who fit the horsey facts on our bingo cards, such as 'who owned the youngest horse' and 'who'd been riding the longest'. It wasn't what I was expecting from a veterinary skills workshop, but it was good fun and a great way to break the ice with the people I'd just met.

Introductions over we then got stuck into some theory, including a refresher on hoof anatomy, its surrounding structures and what all those hard facts really mean for your horse's health and wellbeing, along with how to spot diseases of the foot and generally maintain hoof health.

It didn't feel like your everyday lecture, though. XLEquine has designed the courses to be relaxed and interactive so Richard was open to questions at any point. Six in a group is the perfect size to be able to slip into interesting discussions, and the relaxed atmosphere meant none of us felt afraid to speak up or admit we didn't understand something. We even discussed issues we'd experienced with our own horses and gained advice from Richard on how to deal with them.

### Getting practical

There was no time to get bored of the chit-chat as we were soon on our feet looking at cross sections of hooves and legs to test what we'd just learned in our theory session, followed by a tea break and the



Richard demonstrates his poulticing skills before we give it a go



The theory session on hoof anatomy got us all thinking



The group go solo during the practical poulticing session

highly anticipated practical sessions.

These sessions included how to poultice a hoof and remove a shoe. We were working with the limbs of a deceased horse, which might be a bit off-putting for some - but there's really nothing to worry about because everything is covered and clean and there's no safer way to practise your skills.

Now, in my time owning horses, I've only ever had to remove a twisted shoe, or one that's already on its way out and I quickly

gained a greater appreciation of farriers - I really struggled! However, this was the bit of the course I most enjoyed; after all, I might just need this important skill one day and I clearly needed the practice. Where else would I get the opportunity to do it in such a safe and controlled environment?

### Step-by-step guidance

Our day came to a close with an exercise designed to help us understand what to do if something penetrated the foot, including; when to call the vet, what action to take, what action the vet might take and the likely vet bill at the end of it all.

We worked through real cases and learned the outcome of each, understanding how best to deal with a similar scenario. This gave me real confidence. I came away feeling I'd know how to act and what I should do to keep my horse comfortable and safe while preparing for my vet's arrival if the need arose.

All in all I'd rate the Foot Care workshop 9/10 (more practical sessions please and I'll up that to 10!). This felt like a new way of learning and offered me something I didn't feel I could get anywhere else. Richard was approachable and friendly and I came away having learnt lots - real, useable skills.

But, if you're not quite convinced let me persuade you with six really good reasons:

1 In the practical sessions you'll be given on-hand and step-by-step expert guidance and plenty of time - so if you're new to owning horses, or simply want to top up your technique, this course will give you bags of confidence.

2 You'll gain real insight into the way equine vets work, helping you to understand how and why they arrive at, and make, decisions about your horse's health care.

3 It's an inexpensive way to learn vital emergency and everyday skills that could also help you save on vet bills (what's not to like about that?).

4 Yes you'll be there to learn but you'll also meet like-minded people and have fun (there's tea, biscuits and cake too!).

5 You'll come away with a helpful fact book packed with useful information.

6 Why shouldn't you book your place? Where else could you do a course like this?



I play it cool as my lack of strength becomes obvious when removing a shoe



We were challenged to put our anatomy theory to the test

Caption xxxx  
xxxxx

Pic to come from  
Emma Batson at XL

AWAITING WEB URL  
FOR ONLINE SURVEY  
BELOW

### More practical workshops on the horizon...

The launch of the EquineSkills initiative will soon be rolled out across the UK, with 26 Foot Care and First Aid workshops already planned and proving popular. Both interactive courses cost a £60 per person and use live animals and associated props where appropriate.

Like the Foot Care workshop, the First Aid ones are designed to equip attendees with the confidence and skills you need to take charge in emergency situations, while ensuring the safety of everyone involved. This course features:

- The principles of equine first aid
- How to deal with emergencies (discriminating between those that are life-threatening, urgent, semi-urgent and not urgent)
- Undertaking a clinical examination of your horse (including taking temperature, checking pulse, respiration rates and

confirming dehydration)

- Assessing, examining and bandaging a wound

### Have your say

Despite the popularity of the two current courses the team behind them is keen to understand what other workshops horse owners would like to attend.

To help them ascertain popular themes, head online to fill in our quick and easy survey at [XXXXXXXXXX](#) and you'll be entered into a prize draw to win a place on an upcoming workshop.

### Got a question?

Contact the EquineSkills team on 01765 608489 or email [info@xlequine.co.uk](mailto:info@xlequine.co.uk) or visit [www.equineskills.co.uk](http://www.equineskills.co.uk) for more information, a full list of upcoming workshops and to book your place.

### Who are XLEquine?

This feature is brought to you in association with XLEquine. This specialist division of XLVets is an established group of practices working together to deliver a high quality of veterinary care. Currently XLEquine has 35 members across the UK, ranging from large equine referral hospitals to mixed



veterinary practices incorporating over 120 equine vets. To find an XLEquine practice in your area or for more information visit [www.xlequine.co.uk](http://www.xlequine.co.uk)