

Farriers Registration Council Consultation on the Future Strategy for Farrier Training

1. The following response is made on behalf of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). The RCVS is the regulatory body for veterinary surgeons in the UK. The role of the RCVS is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care through the regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and nurses, thereby protecting the interests of those dependent on animals, and assuring public health. It also acts as an impartial source of informed opinion on relevant veterinary matters.
2. As the regulatory body, the RCVS will limit its comments to those areas where there are clear indications of relevance to the College's role.
3. The RCVS welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Future Strategy for Farrier Training. Veterinary surgeons and farriers work in close cooperation to ensure the health and welfare of horses. The College notes the importance of farriers not only being thoroughly trained but maintaining their skill level through lifelong training and continuing professional development (CPD). The College recognises that a well-founded knowledge of the anatomy, physiology and function of the equine limb is essential to farriery as well as an understanding of those commoner pathological processes that cause disease within the horse's foot. The horse-owning public rely heavily on their farriers to shoe competently and the farrier is frequently the first point of contact with respect to hoof care and when lameness occurs. It is therefore vital that apprentices have appropriate insight into the need for veterinary intervention. The equine sector is a large and growing part of the national economy as well as of the 'veterinary economy' thus there is a public interest in farrier training. The veterinary profession currently supports the training of apprentices by supplying visiting lecturers to the farriery training colleges and examiners for the Worshipful Company of Farriers. In addition the RCVS nominates two members of the Farriers Registration Council (FRC).

Question 1 – What changes would you like to see to the selection of apprentices, if any?

4. The College has no comments with respect to the selection of apprentices.

Question 2 – Do you have any comments on the qualifications, recruitment, training or management of ATFs, or their CPD requirements?

5. The Approved Training Farrier (ATF) has a pivotal role in providing training to each apprentice. The apprentice spends the vast majority of his / her time with the ATF and it is inevitable that they will be heavily influenced by him/her. The RCVS supports the requirement for an ATF to be at least four years qualified as a Diploma of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (DWCF) holder or two years qualified as an Associate of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (AWCF). The RCVS believes that there should be a specified CPD requirement for ATFs. The College recognises that the FRC has no statutory power to make CPD a prerequisite of registration (as is also the case for the RCVS) but is of the view that ATFs have such an influential role on future

generations of farriers that an enhanced CPD requirement for them is both reasonable and desirable.

Question 3 - Do you consider the teaching / assessment balance between Colleges and ATFs is appropriate? Could assessments be carried out more effectively, and if so how?

Question 4 - Do you consider the current College block system meets the needs of apprentices? If not, how could it be improved?

Question 5 - Do you consider the current role of the NFTA is appropriate? If not how would you change it?

6. As well as a sound theoretical knowledge, the apprentice farrier needs to acquire extensive practical experience before becoming sufficiently competent to shoe horses unsupervised. Poor farriery can have a negative welfare impact on horses. Therefore the RCVS supports the current balance between college based and ATF-based training, as long as the National Farrier Training Association (NFTA) continues to support and monitor the quality of delivery by the individual ATFs. The RCVS notes, however, that college-based assessment and independent assessment by the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF) ensures consistency and objectivity, which might be compromised should work-based assessment by ATFs be implemented.
7. The College would be anxious to ensure that, despite 'cuts' in education expenditure, there remains a high level of veterinary involvement in the College courses both in terms of delivery and in formulating the content. The College believes that maintaining high standards of practical skills including the ability to forge shoes is important in terms of equine welfare.

Question 6 - Do you consider the range and level of knowledge, understanding and practical skills delivered by the Advanced Apprenticeship is appropriate?

8. The RCVS does consider that the current knowledge, understanding and practical skills of the current DWCF to be appropriate. UK farriery has an international reputation for its quality and the RCVS understands that in many respects the DWCF is seen as a benchmark qualification for other countries to emulate.
9. If you require clarification on the above comments, please do not hesitate to contact me. Alternatively, representatives from the RCVS would be happy to meet you to discuss and expand upon our position.