



TAWS / BVA Overseas Association Annual Seminar

This was held in Hereford on 4th April, where delegates were guests of the Rural Crafts Centre at Holme Lacy. The theme for the day was “Towards lasting solutions to foot and harness problems in working equines overseas.”

In the morning session staff of the School of Farriery outlined training in the UK and demonstrated tool making and the art and science of trimming and shoeing. As well as a good knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the equine foot, the farrier must have astute powers of observation. Accurate assessment of the animal's conformation is vital if the farrier is to leave its feet appropriately balanced.

Turning to the developing world, training is again the key but the standards set must be appropriate to the region. Furthermore, since there are legal restrictions which apply to training overseas farriers in the UK, it makes sense to encourage training in country/region. Here, we should “focus on training trainers rather than practitioners.”

During the afternoon attention was switched to harness but many of the points were similar. Local needs, locally available materials and standards appropriate to the region were all referred to again. Using a neat and very patient donkey, the afternoon speakers brought the principles of good harness from three perspectives. Recognising the difference of conformation between horse and donkey, particularly in the set of the head and neck, the merits and demerits of breast and neck collars were discussed. A breast collar designed for horses and shaped to allow freedom of movement of the shoulders was demonstrated.

A document “Guidelines for Equine Draught Harness for Developing Countries” was tabled by TAWS. While recognising local variation, this sets out the irreducible essentials of good harness, each part working for the efficient, comfortable and safe working of the animal. This met with general approval and it is intended that it should be published separately in the near future.

Further information is available through the TAWS website: www.taws.org or by E-mail: info@taws.org