

My journey to into hoof care and agriculture from across the pond



by Neil Barret, category one trimmer



My journey started 25yrs ago as a fresh faced 17-year-old straight out of year one agricultural college. I took a job as a student herdsman on a farm 2 hours from my native Warwickshire. I remember going for the interview not exactly knowing where the farm was, but on arrival it became obvious, it was at the royal farms Windsor working with the queen's jersey herd. This position was a 12-month contract. On completion of this year I returned to agricultural college to complete my studies. After year spent working on local dairy farm I decided to broaden my horizons. So, I moved to New Zealand for a year to working on large grazing dairy farms.

On my return I managed herds from 100cows to 300cows, I had always had an interest in hoof care, I did my first trimming course as a student in Windsor. From early in my career I understood the importance of lameness prevention.

As the herd manager of a farm in Gloucester I had the pleasure and privilege of working alongside Roger Blowey as the farm vet.

This really ignited my desire in hoof care and led me into full time

hoof care and lameness prevention.

Along with Roger there was one other driving factor that took me down the hoof trimmer path.

Like a lot of people, I was happily going along with 1 child in tow young Henry, then boom!! Along come the triplets !!! that's right I went from One to four overnights!

So being employed as a herdsman on call 24/7 this didn't fit in with the needs of having 4 kids under 3.

So, I decided to follow my passion into hoof care, this started off by helping a fellow hoof trimmer that had broken his leg, my work with Paul Goodland got the attention of a local veterinary practice, in the UK veterinary practices employ around 30 hoof trimmers in the UK, this is continuing to grow as vets look towards other revenue streams as drug sales drop. This means as independent hoof trimmers need to be at the top of their game.

I worked at Tyndale vets for 2 years in this time I learnt and understood the importance of training which led me to the door of the National Association of Cattle Hoof Trimmers (NACFT).

NACFT was set up 26 years ago by John Dawson a vet from Cheshire that has an interest in training and recognised the need and potential for an organisation to represent hoof trimmers. NACFT Category one listing is a recognised qualification by milk buyers' vets and other industry individuals.

Training has traditionally been

carried out by embryonic with the teaching carried out by Piet Klosterman, so many UK trimmers have had the privilege of training being carried out by one of the great trimmers in the world and I believe trimmer training should be carried out by experienced qualified trimmers. I am Category one trimmer, you achieve this by completing the Dutch diploma followed by bi-annual check days, although this is far from perfect it does encourage trimmers to meet up bi-annually.

As the origination enters the next quarter century its not all been plain sailing, around 5 years ago a group of trimmers wanted a higher level of scrutiny of work practices. They wanted to carry out spot checks on trimmers by turning up unannounced to assess their trimming methods, although as trimmers across the world we need to improve.

This group went on to form the cattle hoof care standards board, this group has a membership of 15 of which 8 are members of the NACFT which has a membership 120, they have based their training on the DairyLand method.

But I believe we can do this by attending shows conferences and hoof trimming events your country and across the world. which leads me to my trip to Canada with Victor Daniel. I first met Vic two years ago when he came to our conference in the UK. After the conference Vic stayed with me for a couple of days. Earlier this year Vic asked me if I would like to attend the Ontario

continued on next page

continued from previous page

hoof trimmers guild conference. Along with presenting at this event I could spend the week with Vic and Doug Johnston completing the white line atlas method instructor course. What fantastic opportunity to broaden my horizons. I am extremely proud to be the only white line instructor outside north America. I believe carrying out this type of continual professional training is a much better way of improving our standards, I always say if you get the opportunity to spend a day with a different trimmer take it. Every day is school day!!

Two years ago, I left my position with the vets to set up NJBHoofcare, we continued to provide a great service to our existing client base along with new clients. My business model has never been to trim 100 cows a day but to provide a quality service to my farms-based quality not quantity, our farms vary in size from 80 cow herds to 1200 cows. We have around 70 farms on our books with most farms are on a monthly routine with two farms on bi-weekly frequency. My other passion is training, aim is to make sure all staff and farmers know how to treat lameness at the first instance. As I develop I would like to take on a role in trimmer training.

The future of the NACFT is very exciting, in the UK the dairy industry is governed by the milk buyer and primarily the super markets, most of my farms are on this type of contract, the farmer gets paid a premium but in return they must have the highest standards from improving their carbon footprint to ensuring the animal welfare standards are the highest. To help our members of the NACFT meet this we are bringing in the Register of Cattle Foot Trimmers (ROCFT). This is an independent body of 6-10 people from trimmers to vets to farmers and industry professionals. The reason this is in place is to work as an independent board that in the unfortunate event that a trimmer's work is called into question it can take an impartial view to the truth. This leaves the NACFT free to work alongside the trimmer and protect their interest.

Right: Roger Blowey



Above: Where the Queen gets her cream. Neil had privilege of working for her.

Right: A solid lad



Below: Why I work so hard and smile so much



Right: Piet Kloosterman learning from the best!

