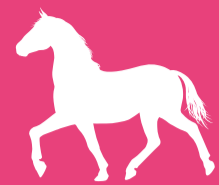


# VETERINARY LIFE BEHIND THE SCENES

With the New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society  
by Seadown Equine Vets

Advertorial



■ Photo: NFPB&CS



■ The Boxing Day point to point which is the last traditional point to point in the country

**THE New Forest is a magical place of ancient woodland, open moors, beautiful glades and coastal walks. It is still one of the largest remaining tracts of unenclosed pasture and heathland in the UK where ponies, cattle, donkeys and deer roam free.**

The earliest record of horses in the New Forest dates back to 1016 when 'rights of common pasture' were granted to the people living in what was a royal hunting ground. The New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society (NFPB&CS) is the official breed society and holder of the Studbook of Origin, handling the registrations of the purebred and partbred New Forest pony.

Here we talk to the Society vets, Laura Trigg, Seadown Equine clinical director and equine vet and her Seadown equine vet colleague, Louisa Weinfeld, to get a real behind the scenes look at their respective roles and just what it means to them.

**Q: Can you provide some background to Seadown's involvement with the society?**

**Laura:** Seadown vets has been involved since the days when Peter Goodwin and Ralph Ellis were partners in the Seadown practice, so approximately 50 years! I took over the role from Peter Tunney six years ago and I performed this role alongside Hannah Buteux for several years, before Louisa Weinfeld replaced Hannah earlier this year. As you can see, Seadown has had a long association with the society.

**Q: What are your current roles as society vets?**

**Laura:** We work in an advisory capacity for the society, we sit on the council meetings and discuss any issues that arise which involve the veterinary care of the ponies. Issues we have been involved with are diverse, from the admittance of palomino ponies into the stud book on a genetic basis to discussing the storage of semen from Forest stallions as part of the rare breeds survival trust.

**Louisa:** We attend the monthly meetings with the pony breeders society, during which a range of matters are discussed – many of which I'm sure you can imagine the pony breeders are very passionate about! However, our role as the vets is to consider relevant issues e.g. the presence of contagious diseases on the Forest grazing herd and how best to manage that.

We attend the stallion grading day as well. Any stallions who are approved by the judges to be used for breeding are examined. It is a basic examination where we will check their heart, eyes, we check them for sarcoids, and importantly considering their intended role, we check their genital organs. We also measure their bone and height, their soundness, and we will also consider their conformation – poor conformation can be passed to their offspring (although the judges are very hot on this!).

**Q: Do your roles vary between you both?**

**Laura:** Louisa and I work well together and will discuss ideas

■ Photo: SeadownVets



■ Seadown equine vet, Louisa Weinfeld

and protocols between ourselves. Louisa's family background in the breeding of horses has proved very useful.

**Q: How has the veterinary role changed over time?**

**Laura:** The advancement of genetics and its use in veterinary medicine has transformed the testing that can be done for genetic conditions such as PSSM1 which was discovered to be a genetic fault in some bloodlines of New Forest ponies. With rigorous testing of stallions and youngstock this condition has been almost eradicated within the breed.

**Q: What aspect of your roles are the most rewarding?**

**Louisa:** I really enjoy working with the pony breeders. They are very knowledgeable horse people with years/generations of experience and they take a great pride in their bloodlines – and rightly so. New Forest ponies are the most wonderful breed to work with, they are generally very obliging and kind natured, but just have enough sass to keep you entertained!

**Laura:** I really enjoy "vetting" the two-year-old colts. We get to see the future of the New Forest pony breed at its best. We also vet the colts at four-five years old, and it is really interesting to see how the ponies have developed into young stallions at this point.

**Q: When you look back over your time working as the society vets, what experiences or cases stand out in your mind?**

**Laura:** I think being part of a society and breed which is integral to Forest life is a privilege. Being involved in the development and evolution of the Forest Pony is very special. I think working at the Boxing Day point-to-point (the last traditional point-to-point in the country) is always a

pleasure. To see the New Forest ponies looking super fit and racing over their "own" terrain is a great spectacle.

**Q: Do you envisage your roles changing much in the future?**

**Laura:** I think as veterinary science moves on there may be a further role in "screening" tests to ensure that the New Forest pony keeps its reputation as one of the healthiest and hardiest native breeds. I think as vets we will continue to work with the judges in the grading and vetting which approves the up-and-coming stallions and hopefully seeing their progeny continuing the success of the New Forest pony in many competitive spheres.

**Q: Lastly, is there anything else you wish to add, or do you have any particular message for the society members?**

**Louisa:** On a serious matter the number of livestock road casualties over the past few weeks has been truly heartbreaking, for me it is very much the dark side of working in this beautiful place. I would encourage readers to spread the word that caution is needed when driving on these roads. Livestock are unpredictable, and sometimes visibility may be poor – a dark horse in the shadows on a sunny day, or on a thick misty night, we need to respect the unique road challenges of the Forest.

**Laura:** The work that goes on behind the scenes in running the NFPB&CS with the grading, futurity schemes, organisation of the breed show and the Boxing Day point-to-point, to name but a few activities, is incredible.

I would like to say thank you to all involved for their dedication to the society and hopefully Louisa and I can be a small cog in a wheel which will keep the traditions of the Forest turning forever!

■ Photo: Horse and Hound



■ Seadown equine vet Laura Trigg checking a New Forest pony

For more information on Seadown Veterinary Services visit: [www.seadownvets.co.uk](http://www.seadownvets.co.uk)