

Interview with Adam Whitehead

Resident Farrier

University of Florida

Large Animal Hospital

The University of Florida resident farrier is Adam Whitehead. Adam is a veteran of the farrier industry. Early in his career he worked mainly with western show horses which lead him to shoe at the Appaloosa Nationals and Paint Horse World shows. As his career progressed he focused his attention on sport horses and lameness concerns and worked on horses from 4-H to Olympic levels. As the resident farrier at the University of Florida, Large Animal Hospital, Adam focuses his attention on therapeutic work for all disciplines and educating vet students on the function of the equine foot. Adam has become a specialist in the hoof care industry and has consulted on and treated thousands of lameness cases.

KAT: Now that you've had the Merlin for a few months have you increased your frequency of use?

AW: I have found the more I use the Merlin the more uses I find for it.

KAT: Does this mean that you have now gotten to the point of thinking about the Merlin first when you come across a different task?

AW: Yes, it's probably my first choice for a lot of the things I do.

KAT: When you're trying the Merlin on something new, do you go through the different accessories to see which works the best or do you count on the experience that you now have with the tool to kind of know which accessory you want to use?

AW: My end goal and my experience dictate the accessories I use.

However, I primarily use the tool for hoof wall resections and debridement of hoof cracks.

KAT: If you're using different accessories at one time to accomplish a task, any problem with having to take the time to change accessories?

AW: I have two Merlins so I generally use both tools with different attachments and that helps to increase productivity.

KAT: You said that you have two Merlins. I believe you have a variable speed and a fixed speed. Is there an advantage of one over the other?

AW: Not really, I use both together with the different attachments, but the fixed speed is my favorite.

KAT: Are there any applications where you specifically need the variable speed?

AW: No

KAT: Does the Merlin make the task easier?

AW: Easier and faster. With one attachment I can trim and prepare the foot and I don't need to take as many tools to the stall with me.

KAT: Is there a convenience factor with using the Merlin?

AW: It's easy to take the tool to the stall or into surgery and be able to use it for multiple purposes; resection, trimming, sanding and finishing and not have to take several tools.

KAT: What tools has the Merlin replaced that you don't have to take with you?

AW: Most cases a dremel, sometimes a rasp, nippers, and knife



KAT: Let's talk about the different accessories. How are you using the chain saw blade disc?

AW: I use the chain saw blade primarily for gross removal of the hoof wall no matter what the problem.

KAT: Do you use the 4-tooth or the 8-tooth disc?

AW: Both work good.

KAT: What would you say would be your favorite accessory?

AW: The blue disc is probably my favorite, I use it extensively to debride cracks, do minor to moderate resections, cut splints and anything else you can think of.

KAT: What makes the blue disc your favorite?

AW: It is thin enough to open a crack only as much as needed. The multiple cutting surfaces make it very versatile as well.

KAT: Does using the blue disc make debriding cracks easier or faster?

AW: The disc makes the job so much easier and I'd say that it's at least twice as fast.

KAT: What tools have you replaced by using the Merlin to debride cracks?

AW: Dremmel, knives, rasps, nippers

KAT: Do you use the orange tungsten carbide disc?

AW: The orange is the next most popular for me, I use it most often when I'm doing resections, trimming baby feet and preparing the outer hoof wall for glue on shoes. I use it to trim feet in surgery, prepare hooves for glue on shoes in surgery and smoothing the outer edges of resections done with the chain saw disc.

KAT: What are the steps you go through to do a resection?

AW: First I determine the full extent of the problem thru lameness exams and a variety of diagnostics. Once we determine a resection is necessary I generally start with the gross removal of the hoof wall. I can use both the chain saw disc and the orange disc to remove the hoof wall. After I've removed the hoof wall I'll finish with the orange, blue or red disks smoothing the edges so the appearance is nicer.



KAT: How do you specifically use the orange disc during resections?

AW: Because the bottom edge of the orange disc is coated with an abrasive surface it allows me the freedom to cut moving up and down the hoof. It also allows me to be more precise because I can see the cut surface easier. The orange disc is very versatile with the bottom edge being coated.

KAT: Does the Merlin allow you to be more precise?

AW: In some cases I'd say, yes it does.

KAT: During which steps of the resection is the Merlin used?

AW: In a lot of case the entire process.

KAT: Does the Merlin make resections easier or faster?

AW: Much easier. Time is money for the client, speed is important, precision is as well and Merlin offers both.

KAT: What tools would you have used in the past to do the resection?

AW: Nipper, knives, rasps, dremmel tool

KAT: Do you use the flap disc sanding disc?

AW: I mainly use the 100 grit sanding disc. I use the sanding disc on the hoof to get a smoother finish. I also use the disc to do grinding on the shoe.

KAT: Any unique uses for any of the accessories that you've found?

AW: I found that I can use the Merlin to create splints that I use on the horses.

KAT: What are the splints made from?

AW: PVC pipe

KAT: Which accessory do you use to cut the splints?

AW: The green "V" groove disc works the best.

KAT: What other task do you use the Merlin for?

AW: I also use it during my foot prep for gluing shoes on babies when they can't come to my shop.

KAT: How old are these baby horses?

AW: Age varies from a few days old to a year old

KAT: What are the steps in doing foot prep?

AW: Cleaning the outside of the hoof wall off so the glue will adhere, and trimming and balancing the foot

KAT: At which steps is the Merlin used?

AW: I use the Merlin to both trim and balance and clean the outside of the foot.

KAT: Which accessories do you use?

AW: The flap disc sander works well for younger babies as their feet are very thin and soft, the older babies I use the orange or blue disc. This is a judgment call; there isn't a set age when I change.

KAT: What tools would you have used in the past to do the same thing?

AW: I would trim with a rasp and hoof knife, and then prepare the outside of the hoof with a dremmel with the drum sander attachment