



Meet PBEC's New Veterinarian Tom Ratcliffe

Raised near Manchester, England, Tom Ratcliffe earned his Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine & Surgery degree from the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in 2020. He then completed a rotating internship at Hambleton Equine Clinic in the UK, followed by a specialty internship at The Hong Kong Jockey Club. Tom began his Large Animal Surgical Residency at Cornell University in 2023 and joined Palm Beach Equine Clinic (PBEC) in August 2026 as an associate veterinarian specializing in surgery and Thoroughbred racehorses.

Ratcliffe, raised rurally in England and a Thoroughbred racing enthusiast, was familiar with horses as a boy, so after an equine surgeon spoke at his school, he was intrigued and decided that day that a career as an equine surgeon was what he wanted to pursue.

After finishing his studies at the University of Edinburgh, he moved on to an internship at Hambleton Equine Clinic in North Yorkshire, England. There, he worked with a variety of equine sport horses, including jumping, dressage, racing, and trail horses. The chance to venture out to stables and race yards appealed to him as a young man who loved traveling.



Dr. Tom Ratcliffe has joined the PBEC team. Photo by Flaxen Mane Media

While at Hambleton, Ratcliffe worked closely with, and under the supervision of, board-certified surgeons, providing a detailed insight into the day-to-day work of an equine specialist surgeon, which confirmed his ambition to specialize in surgery.

"I chose surgery because you work up a case, arrive at a diagnosis, and can fix it, no matter what it is," he explained. "You don't have to send the horse off to someone else to fix it. That ability to work a case up from start to finish – and actually finish it – this is what appealed to me."

The heavy caseload of horses in flat and national hunt racing at Hambleton piqued Ratcliffe's interest in following the sport in his career.

"My boss, Dr. Phil Cramp, would take me to the race yards in Middleham, a big racing center in the north of England," he recalled. "He got me into the industry, and I decided I wanted to specialize more in racehorses, open myself up to that opportunity, and gain experience focused on that industry in particular. That's what drew me to Hong Kong, one of the world's leading Thoroughbred flat racing institutions."

Through contacts who had previously worked at the Hong Kong Jockey Club, Ratcliffe applied for a specialized internship and was accepted into an 18-month position.

"It was a fantastic experience that cemented the fact that this is what I want to do and the type of horses I want to work with," he said.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club is unique. With more than 1,000 racehorses training and racing at Sha Tin Racecourse and an on-site hospital, Ratcliffe received in-depth training that included day-to-day stable work with horses, scrubbing in for surgeries, and working with the emergency equine ambulance team on race days.



Dr. Tom Ratcliffe with famous racehorse, Romantic Warrior, at the Hong Kong Jockey Club. Photo courtesy of trainer Danny Shum

"I was fortunate enough to have experienced surgeons and senior track veterinarians at the Jockey Club take me under their wing and subsequently provided me with the opportunity to service their stables and trainers," said Ratcliffe. "I would regularly perform lameness and upper airway evaluations. I was also heavily involved in performing diagnostic dynamic scopes of horses, as part of poor performance evaluations."

During his time in Hong Kong, Ratcliffe had the opportunity to work with some of the world's leading Thoroughbred flat racing trainers and highest-ranking horses, such as Romantic Warrior, the world's all-time leading earner, who won \$35.4 million before retiring from racing in September 2026 at the age of eight.

"The opportunity to work with some of the world's best racehorses was fantastic, and actually working on the track in the ambulance during race meets was also hugely beneficial," he remarked.

Also, during his time at The Hong Kong Jockey Club, Ratcliffe initiated research that was clinically relevant to the racing industry. "I undertook a study there examining injury to the palmar proximal metacarpus and the origin of the suspensory ligament in racehorses," he explained. "I explored diagnosing those injuries with low-field MRI and assessing their prognosis for a return to racing, based on the different types of injuries they can sustain in that region."

After his internship, Ratcliffe applied to and was accepted into a three-year surgical residency at Cornell University Equine Hospital, where he received specialist surgical training from some of the world's leading equine surgeons.

As his surgical residency neared completion, Ratcliffe considered his next career step. With established connections in South Florida, he sought an equine clinic where he could perform surgery while also practicing sports medicine in the field. Palm Beach Equine Clinic was the ideal place.

"The PBEC brand and name is well known everywhere," noted Ratcliffe. "Wellington is similar to Hong Kong, in the sense that there is a high concentration of sports horses in one area that provide a very diverse caseload. I prefer to operate a few days a week and spend the other days out in the field working with trainers and clients to maximize the performance capabilities of their horses."

"Preventative orthopedics is hugely important for me. Being able to determine why a horse is not performing to its full ability, treat it, and then see it win or perform well on the track or in the ring is hugely fulfilling," he added. "I look forward to helping clients and their horses achieve their goals and full potential here at Palm Beach Equine Clinic."

Natalie Wheeler Victorious in National Equitation Final

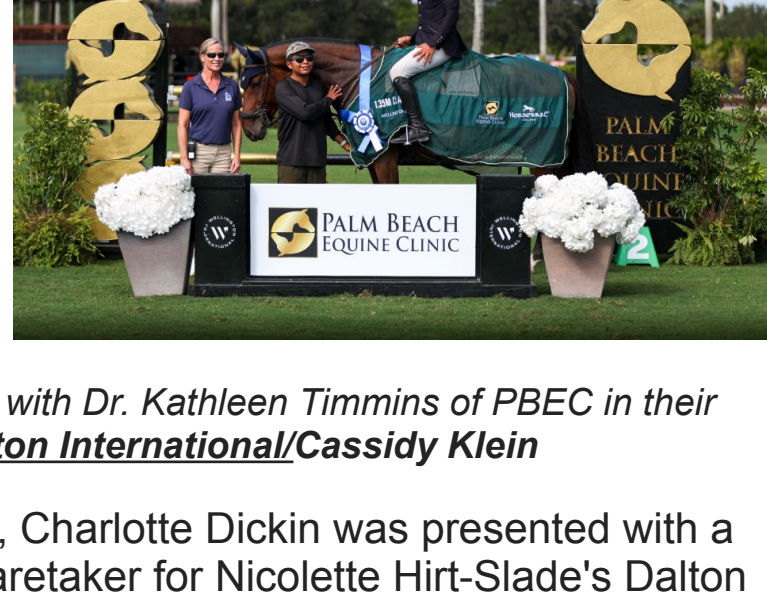


Palm Beach Equine Clinic would like to congratulate Natalie Wheeler, daughter of Jess Wheeler and our very own Dr. Richard Wheeler, on her victory in the 2026 Marshall+Sterling/U.S. Hunter Jumper Association 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Final - East, held on September 23-25 during Capital Challenge Horse Show in Upper Marlboro, MD. She rode Quintago through three phases – flat, gymnastics, and jumping – and was named the winner over 167 other top young riders in the country. **Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography**

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PBEC Celebrates Winners

Congratulations also go out to Jad Dana (LEB), who rode Ever So Clever GM Z, owned by Burr Associates, Inc., to the win by more than seven seconds in the 1.35m Open Stake sponsored by PBEC at Wellington International on August 22.



Jad Dana and Ever So Clever GM Z, along with Dr. Kathleen Timmins of PBEC in their presentation. Photo by Wellington International/Cassidy Klein

At the Old Salem Farm Fall Horse Show, Charlotte Dickinson was presented with a \$500 Grooms' Award by PBEC as the caretaker for Nicolette Hirt-Slade's Dalton Van De Lindhoeve Z, winners of the \$200,000 Blue Diamond Cup Grand Prix CSI4* on September 13. We are proud to support this award that recognizes and rewards grooms for their hard work and love of horses.



Charlotte Dickinson was presented with the PBEC Grooms' Award at the Old Salem Farm Fall Horse Show, with Dr. Christopher Elliott representing PBEC. Photo by SEL Photography

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