

Guidance on safety from Headquarters must be brought to members' notice, and reasonable action taken to prevent riders participating with substandard equipment, but Pony Club cannot be held responsible for members not disclosing contraventions or not following recommendations/advice given on these issues.

Please read the following:

After considering the anecdotal advice given on a recent Equine Specific First Aid Course, Fylde and District committee feel it is necessary to bring to your notice certain amendments being made to the current safety guidelines for riders. These changes will be pointed out at rallies, during tack and rider turnout checks, given out in writing and are posted on the website.

While it is appreciated that hats and body protectors are not cheap, it cannot be emphasized enough that worn, outgrown and damaged items *must* be replaced as soon as practicable with adequately 'rated' equivalents. Beta Standards are found on body protector labels - Purple standard (3) is the highest and recommended level. Hat standards are stated in the Hat Rule article.

Riding Hats: See also [Hat Rule 2006](#). Hats will be examined for compliance with the mandatory standards, but the onus for fit and condition of permitted headgear lies ultimately with the parent/guardian of members under 18. Hats are to be tagged after passing an examination for compliance with the current standards. It is then up to the members parent/guardian to maintain/replace the headgear and follow any advice given on suitability.

Body Protectors: *Compulsory for all cross country riding under Pony Club rules/instruction and recommended for all jumping.* Although body protectors often mitigate the levels of injury sustained, in certain conditions they can cause problems and contribute to further injury. The following should be considered. Body protectors **must** fit properly. At the point of sale, a body protector should have been fitted by a trained advisor. Depending on the wearer's growth, a well-fitting body protector may not remain so for long. Body protectors which are too big/long may actually contribute to injuries sustained. They *may* restrict breathing or aggravate air intake should choking occur and, if buried under too many layers of clothing, prevent the immediate application of measures to alleviate airway obstruction. The ease of removal in an emergency might be a point to consider when purchasing a replacement.

Jewellery: Except for wrist/stopwatches, any other form of metal body adornment is forbidden. These include earrings (both sleepers and studs), necklaces and bracelets (other than essential 'medicalert' type) and body piercings. Pony Club cannot be held liable if any member fails to disclose any 'hidden' body piercings which cause subsequent injury.

Long Hair: Long hair must be securely and neatly fastened so that it is collar length or above if practicable. Hair slides and clip fasteners worn beneath a riding hat are also not permitted and are easily overlooked as a potential source of injury. A hairnet should also be worn.

Medical Armbands: These are compulsory for the cross-country phase of any event, and are to facilitate medical treatment by having information quickly available in any accident/incident. They must not be worn by anyone other than the named individual!

Eating Whilst Mounted: *This should also extend to eating whilst wearing a body protector.* Members should not eat, drink or chew gum whilst mounted, due to increased risk of choking. Airway obstruction causes distress and can lead to rapid loss of consciousness, and falling from the saddle may lead to further unnecessary injury being sustained.

General

Tack: Tack should fit the pony and rider correctly, and be in good repair. Stitching on the girth straps and the stirrup leathers **must** be checked regularly for wear.

A note about 'humane' girths - with the 'pull through' buckle strap. These girths are kind and very adjustable but, in the event of a girth strap failure, will loosen considerably more than a fixed strap girth. Even more care to ensure girth strap failure does not occur should be taken! Reins, when held at the shortest length necessary for a particular horse/pony should not be long enough for the rider's foot to be caught in the loop in the slack.

Stirrup Irons: Whichever pattern of stirrup iron is used, the rider's foot, complete with jodhpur boot, must have **1/4 inch clear at each side**, when correctly positioned on the ball of the foot.

Tack checks at events:

These are done to ensure no competitors enter the competition with tack or safety equipment which is not 'Pony Club legal', or is likely to fail or cause pain/injury to the horse or rider. **Guidance on saddle and bridle fitting can be found in the 'Pony Club Manual of Horsemanship' available from our D.C.** Tack checkers are not saddle fitters but will be sufficiently knowledgeable to advise whether a saddle is obviously too far forward or backward, that the girth is too loose and if there is not sufficient clearance (three fingers' depth) over the withers. Notice of poor stitching on reins, stirrup leathers or girth straps will be given to the member or member's parent/guardian and *where there is a problem which makes riding impossible or dangerous, the rider will be asked to dismount and the problem will be referred to the Pony Club official in charge.* Those on tack check duty are volunteers and there to help prevent accidents, however pedantic they may appear to be. They are also following strict Pony Club guidelines.

At Area Level, rules on what tack may be worn is strictly enforced. You are strongly advised to read the rules before attending Area Competitions in order not to be caught out.