

## HI-VIZ

Hi-Viz garments play a key role in rider safety when hacking out on the roads all year round. Manufactured in fluorescent colours and featuring reflective tapes, they should meet a current EU standard for high-visibility garments.



When buying this type of clothing, always ensure that the entire garment meets the appropriate safety standard, rather than just a specific component. Those that do will have been tested to ensure that they are durable and will not fade or lose reflectivity after washing or a short period of use.

A garment's colour and luminance ensure that a rider can be seen clearly during the day, while the retroreflective strips are illuminated by vehicle headlights to make the rider more visible in the dark.

If you wear a garment that does not meet a standard, you might be taking unnecessary risks and, if you were involved in an accident, your insurance cover could be invalidated.



The current hi-visibility standards are:

EN 17353:2020 – for leisure riders

EN ISO 20471:2013 – for professional kit (often issued by employers)

PPE standards do not include items worn by the horse – they apply only to garments worn by riders. So harnesses, tail bandages and exercise sheets do not carry safety standards.

Hi-Viz garments also include a label specifying how many times they can be washed during their lifetime and a sizing chart. It should never simply state S, M or L.

**DRESS TO BE SEEN FROM ALL ANGLES & NEVER ASSUME YOU WILL BE VISIBLE TO ROAD USERS**

## SAFETY BOOTS

For safety's sake, a riding boot needs a small heel – no less than ½in high – to prevent the foot slipping through the stirrup. It should also have a smooth, firm sole with a solid shank between the heel and ball of the foot, and offer plenty of support to the ankle. There should always be up to a 1/4in gap between the stirrup and widest part of the boot on either side



A reinforced toecap is a good idea to help prevent injury if you are stood on by your horse or pony. The UK safety boot standard is primarily defined by EN ISO 20345. This standard measures impact, compression, material resistance and protection from falling objects, slips, chemicals, temperatures and sharps. Beware of shoes claiming that the toecap meets a standard, as it is the entire boot that must be tested.

## QUICK RELEASE STIRRUPS

The choice of stirrups has significantly expanded over time with the latest stirrups combining comfort, performance and safety. Stirrup manufacturers have developed a range of technical models with lightweight construction, grip and durable design.



Quick release stirrups are designed to release the rider's foot quickly and easily in the event of a fall to reduce the likelihood of getting trapped and dragged. Some models use break-away arms, flexible joints and magnetic connections.

There is currently not a single universal safety stirrup standard and guidance should be obtained from organisations and disciplines.

Sadly, no stirrup can guarantee the prevention of accident and injury and proper fit is crucial to be as effective as possible. For a stirrup to be suitable for the rider's footwear, there should be 7mm (¼") clearance on either side of the boot.

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# BETA Guide to Rider Safety Equipment



## A WORLD OF CHOICE

When it comes to safety clothing and equipment, riders have never had so much choice. There is a wide selection of hats, body protectors, air vests, safety stirrups, boots and Hi-Viz gear currently on the market – each carefully designed to meet specific requirements and cater for individual budgets.

This handy BETA guide highlights the key pieces of clothing and kit required for riding and handling horses safely, and explains just how and why they are of benefit to you.

All equipment in this leaflet must carry either the CE mark or UKCA mark to show compliance with basic health and safety requirements shown in the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Directive. The CE mark is neither a quality mark nor standard in itself but a mandatory declaration under EU law. Great Britain has its own mandatory mark – The UK Conformity Assessed (UKCA) mark. Products can display either the UKCA or CE mark in the UK.



For the very best customer service and extensive product knowledge, always look for a BETA brand and shop with a BETA retail member – many of them offer an expert fitting service, too. Look out for their certificate displayed in-store, which shows that they have been trained by BETA to fit riding hats and body protectors. Search by postcode for your nearest retail member at [www.beta-uk.org](http://www.beta-uk.org).

## RIDING HATS

Thanks to modern technology, manufacturers are able to produce hats that are incredibly strong, lightweight and comfortable.

They are designed to protect the head but, for them to work properly, the hat needs to be fitted and fastened correctly. Any hat that suffers severe impact – even by repeatedly dropping it on a hard surface – should be discarded and a new one bought. After all, it's easy to replace a hat, but impossible to replace a head!



Hats can be made to a wide variety of standards, often dependent on the country in which they are sold or made. The hat standard should be marked on the inside of the hat, either on or underneath the lining.

There is a range of quality symbols to choose from, many of which are linked to specific standards. These indicate that the products and manufacturing process undergo regular checks for consistency and quality.

If you plan to compete in the hat, it is important to check the rules of the disciplines involved to ensure that your hat meets their requirements.

For further information about riding hats and safety standards, check out our leaflet *The BETA Guide to Riding Hats*.

## BODY PROTECTORS

Body protectors help to keep you safe by absorbing high levels of energy created when falling off, being kicked or stood on by a horse. To provide the best protection possible, it is essential that the garment fits well and all critical points of the body are covered.

BETA's body protector standard sets the benchmark for safety and is recommended by all leading riding organisations and disciplines. It is important to keep up to date with the current BETA standard and riders competing under the rules of a discipline or organisation should always check which standards are permitted.

Body protectors are made to three different levels of protection, as follows:

Level 1 – provides the lowest level of protection that is only considered appropriate for licensed jockeys. Level 1 is designed to meet the weight restrictions that apply to professional jockeys whilst racing.

Level 2 – offers a lower than normal level of protection. It is considered suitable for general riding in very low risk situations and for professionals such as licensed jockeys when specified by their racing authority or regulatory body.

Level 3 – is considered appropriate for general riding, competitions including eventing and working with horses. Level 3 body protectors should prevent minor bruising that would have produced stiffness and pain, reduce soft tissue injuries and prevent a limited number of rib fractures.

A more detailed overview of body protectors and standards is available in the BETA Guide to Body Protectors.



## SHOULDER PROTECTORS

These are designed to protect the end of the collar bone and can be bought to fit with most brands of body protector, attached via loops found on the shoulders. You can also find a range of specialist T-shirts that have padded shoulders built into them. Shoulder protectors are made to EN 13158 Level 3 and/or BETA Level 3 standards.



## AIR VESTS

Air vests and jackets are made with air bags, which inflate when a mechanism is activated as the rider is thrown from the horse. When this happens, a lanyard – just like a rip-cord – is pulled taut to set off and inflate the garment. There are a variety of different types on the market, with varying body coverage and inward or outwardly inflating air bags.

Although there is currently no European standard specifically for these types of equestrian garments, some companies choose to have them tested to one of the following criteria, neither of which is compulsory:

- NF572-800 2022 standard from France
- EN 1621-4 standard, designed for motorcycle air vests.

A European standard for equestrian air vests is in work now.

Air vests and jackets should always be fitted by a trained supplier to ensure correct attachment of the cord. Because the body protector offers constant protection, we recommend that it should always be worn under an air vest, which only offers protection on inflation. In addition, air vests work well for flat falls but offer limited, if any, protection against sharp objects, direct kicks when falling or on the ground.

Hybrid versions of these garments are available, combining a body protector, which should always be approved to BETA Level 3, with an integral air vest.

## Back Protector

In a move back in time, back protectors, as the name implies, offer protection only over the back with a particular focus on spinal and lower back protection and nothing more. They're designed to be lighter and thinner, covering your spine from the base of your neck down, depending on style as far down as your tailbone.

They can be discretely worn underneath jackets and are often incorporated into other items of clothing.

The level of protection is usually significantly less than that offered by body protectors and they also don't offer the same level of overall coverage. Whilst a specific equestrian body protector standard is currently being written in Europe, some manufacturers test garments to the motorcycle back protector standard EN1621-2-2014.

