



The Oregon 4-H Helmet Policy: What Do I Need to Know?

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Horseback riding has one of the highest injury rates of all sports—including football! The major reason is that in contrast to other sports, only 20 percent of horse riders wear protective headgear every time they ride, and more than 40 percent of riders never wear a helmet. Other facts related to injuries and their impact upon children and young adults:

- In 1992, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated over 34,600 children and young adults (up to age 24) for horse-related injuries.
- Most serious equestrian injuries are caused by being thrown from or falling off the horse while riding, or by falling with the horse.
- The most common cause of death and serious injury in all riders is head injury,



Western helmet



English velvet helmet

and young riders suffer the highest percentage of head injuries.

- Up to 38 percent of equestrian injuries result in hospitalization, and up to 48 percent involve fractures.
- About 20 percent of horse-related injuries occur to the head and face.
- In a review of equestrian fatalities between 1975 and 1990 in Alberta, Canada, over 47 percent of those fatally injured were 20 years of age or younger, and over 18 percent were under the age of 6.
- A mail survey of 2,195 frequent riders

showed a high prevalence of hospitalization and prolonged disability among injured equestrians.

The good news is, head injuries are preventable—if you wear a protective equestrian helmet. The Oregon 4-H Program has instituted a new equestrian helmet

policy that reinforces conclusions drawn from medical studies supported by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Equestrian Association, and the Horsemanship Safety Association Inc. The policy reads:

Effective January 1, 1996, all Oregon 4-H members participating in any 4-H equestrian activity, regardless of riding seat, will wear a properly fitted equestrian helmet which meets the minimum performance standards imposed by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) F1163 and includes certification and labeling required by the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI). Such headgear will be secured with the harness engaged and be properly fastened when mounted on an equine or in a vehicle (cart, wagon, buggy, etc.) being pulled by one or more equine.

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OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

4-H 13001
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Hard-shell helmet

Questions and answers about the Oregon 4-H headgear policy

Q: When did this requirement in the Oregon 4-H Horse Program go into effect?

A: January 1, 1996

Q: Am I required to wear approved headgear in a showmanship class?

A: No. You are not "mounted." However, it is strongly recommended.

Q: Is my 4-H leader required to wear approved headgear?

A: No. But we would like 4-H leaders to be positive role models for our members and participate actively in the protective headgear program.

Q: Is this helmet rule in effect only at statewide 4-H Horse Program functions?

A: No. It's in effect at all Oregon 4-H Horse Program functions at the club, county, and state level.

Q: Who is responsible for making sure I have an approved helmet that fits me properly?

A: Your parent(s) or legal guardian is responsible for making sure you have an approved helmet that fits properly. This would be viewed in the same light as wearing properly fitting boots, belt, or pants. 4-H leaders should immediately dismiss from all club riding activities any member who comes to a meeting without approved, properly fitting headgear, and readmit that member only when he or she has obtained approved and properly fitted headgear.

How to obtain an equestrian helmet

When shopping for an equestrian helmet, be certain to specify that you are interested in an ASTM/SEI certified helmet. Look for the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) logo (below) on the box, and, more importantly, inside the helmet. Don't take the sales clerk's word that the helmet is approved. Be an "informed consumer." If you don't see evidence that the helmet is manufactured according to ASTM F1163 standards and is SEI certified, don't buy it!



Most tack shops carry a variety of helmets from different manufacturers. If you have questions about helmets you've seen advertised as "approved," when in fact they may not be ASTM/SEI certified, please contact your local Extension office or the State 4-H Office at Oregon State University (541-737-2421).

Use and care

Equestrian helmets are manufactured according to strict specifications. The most important function of the riding helmet is to redistribute and thus reduce potentially harmful forces. The force that can be generated by falling from a galloping horse (at approximately 25-30 mph) ranges from 100 to 300 G's.

The more protective the helmet, the lower the force transmitted to the

rider's head. The helmet should fit as snugly and yet as comfortably as possible, and should stay on the head even when the chin strap is unfastened. Always fasten the chin strap securely before mounting the horse.

If you fall and hit your helmet, do **not** continue to wear the helmet.

Equestrian headgear absorbs the energy of an impact through partial destruction, which may not be visible to the

naked eye. Return the helmet to the manufacturer for inspection and possible replacement. Carefully

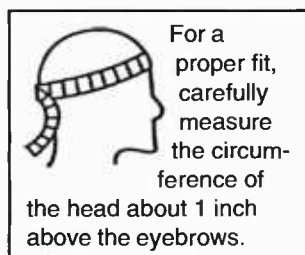
read the instructions that accompany your helmet for information on how to get a replacement if necessary.

Sizing your helmet

Your helmet fits properly when it is level from front to back and the front edge rests no more than an inch from the top of your eyebrows. The helmet should fit your head snugly; it should not slide freely about or "roll" forward or backward. It should not be removable without unbuckling the strap.

For a proper fit, carefully measure the circumference of your head about 1 inch above your eyebrows. The chart below can provide an easy reference for you when ordering. Some manufacturers have different standards for equating skull measurement and helmet size. Check the manufacturer's recommendations before ordering.

How to measure head size



Size chart

20"	20 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	21"	21 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	22"	22 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	23"	23 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	24"	24 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	25"
6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	6 $\frac{5}{8}$ "	6 $\frac{3}{4}$ "	6 $\frac{7}{8}$ "	7"	7 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	7 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	7 $\frac{3}{8}$ "	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	7 $\frac{5}{8}$ "	7 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Small	Medium	Large
6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -6 $\frac{5}{8}$ -6 $\frac{3}{4}$	6 $\frac{7}{8}$ -7-7 $\frac{1}{8}$ -7 $\frac{1}{4}$	7 $\frac{3}{8}$ -7 $\frac{1}{2}$ -7 $\frac{5}{8}$

Approved helmet manufacturers

International Riding
Helmets, Inc.
718-356-1640

Lexington Safety Products, Inc.
606-233-1404;
1-800-928-4287

Safetech Injury Preventive Technologies
(formerly Troxel)
619-429-1441; 1-800-288-4280

Australian Holdings
310-348-1993

The Knightsbridge Line
(marketed in
Libertyville Saddle Shop)
1-800-872-3353

This publication uses trade names to simplify information. Endorsement is neither intended nor implied by 4-H, Oregon State University Extension Service, or Oregon State University. Although the headgear described in this publication meets or exceeds ASTM F1163 standards, no headgear can protect the wearer against all possible impacts. Under certain conditions, riding or driving incidents can cause serious injury or death. The headgear must fit well and all retention straps must be securely fastened.

Helmets are constructed so that the energy of an impact can be absorbed through partial destruction of the headgear. Damage may not be visible to the naked eye. If the helmet suffers such impact, it should not be worn again until inspected by the manufacturer. Helmets may be seriously damaged by some common substances without visible damage. Consult the manufacturer before applying cleaning agents, paints, adhesives, and the like. Do not use your helmet without first reading instructions provided by the manufacturer.

For further reading

In the "Get Under the Safety Umbrella" series:
Keeping Oregon Covered Leader Guide,
4-H 1300L. No charge.

Riding on the Road,
4-H 13002. No charge.

Trailering Your Horse,
4-H 13003. No charge.



Extension's 4-H Youth Development program assists young people, their families, and adult volunteers to become productive and self-directing by developing their practical skills and knowledge. Professionals and volunteers together provide educational projects and activities in animal science, home economics, engineering, natural science, horticulture, and expressive arts.

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