

# New Zealand Pony Clubs Association Inc.

## Body Protectors [as presented to the NZPCA Conference June 2008]

It is mandatory for body protectors to be worn during the cross country at all Equestrian Sports NZ events.

As from 1 January 2009 it will be mandatory for all Pony Club riders to wear a body protector on the cross country phase.

Body Protectors are not a new invention, they have been around for years.

### United Kingdom Pony Club ruling:

- The Pony Club does not make the use of body protectors compulsory, EXCEPT FOR ALL CROSS-COUNTRY RIDING AND PONY RACING whether it be training or competing.
- The responsibility for choosing body protectors and the decision as to their use must rest with the members and their parents.
- It is recommended that a rider's body protector should not be more than 2% of their body weight.

The BETA 2000 standard is also recommended by the British Horse Society, British Horse trials Association and BHS Riding Clubs.

**British Equestrian Trade Association otherwise known as BETA**, administer the Internationally recognized BETA Standards.

The standard was developed in consultation with riding organizations, medical consultants and technical advice from RAPRA. The current BETA 2000 standard has an annual re-testing of garments to ensure consistency of the Standard, this sets it apart from the European Standard and CE Mark.

**EN 13158 The European standard**, meets the same standard as the Beta level 3.

**ASTM approved vest** is recommended by The United States Pony Club. ASTM stands for American Society for Testing Materials.

### The BETA body protector has three levels of protection

**Level 1 [Black label]** Only considered appropriate for license jockeys.

**Level 2 [Brown label]** Provides a lower than normal level of protection that is only considered appropriate for use in low level situations. These DO NOT include riding on the road or hard surfaces, riding over jumps, riding young or excitable horses, or riding while inexperienced.

**Level 3 [Purple label]** Considered appropriate for normal horse riding, competitions and for working with horses.

Protectors to this level should:

- Prevent minor bruising that would have produced stiffness and pain.
- Reduce significant soft tissue injuries to the level of the bruising.
- Prevent a limited number of rib fractures.

### The effectiveness of a body protector depends on the correct one for the job being chosen, and on ensuring that the fit of the garment is correct.

Taking all relevant factors into consideration the best one may not always be the highest level available if the hazards are not severe.

A child with a low body weight could be as well protected in a fall in a level 2 garment as a heavy rider in a level 3.

There is no difference between light children and heavy adults when they are kicked by a horse. The nature of the hazard and the level of risk must be determined.

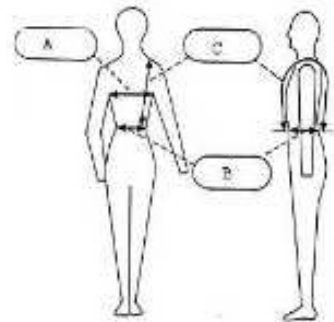
**Body protectors** offer some protection from impacts when falling from a horse. Impacts may be soft or hard ground, trees, vehicles, posts and rails. Fallen riders may also be kicked or trodden on by the horse.

### Injuries cannot be entirely prevented by any protective clothing but should be reduced in severity.

In order to measure for your body protector you need to take three measurements:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| A | Chest                                  |
| B | Waist                                  |
| C | Over the shoulder from waist to waist. |

Compare these measurements with the chart of the body protector you would like to buy, and the size you need is the size that contains at least two of the three measurements. If the third measurement shows the over the shoulder as too long, please try a different body protector style to see if that offers a better fit. If the over the shoulder is a little short, it is not so much of a problem and is acceptable as long as it is only up to 4cm too short. It is important not to buy your body protector too long or too big as this may lead to serious injury.



**Body protectors are useless if they do not fit properly.**

- Put on the protector, adjust to a snug fit.
- Ensure all hook fastenings at each closure is in contact with the loop material.
- Check the overall fit is snug.

Try on the protector over light clothing. **Check comfort in all simulated riding positions.**

When sitting in the saddle the rider should be able to put a hands width between the bottom of the protector and the saddle. A rigid body protector that extends too low may cause injury if the rider falls off. The body protector should not 'ride up' on the wearer's body.

**Where Shoulder protectors** are an integral part of the garment they should never be removed as by doing so the benefits of the garment are substantially reduced.

All approved body protectors have instructions giving details on fitting, caring, and washing.

There is a range of body protectors on the market, the recommended ones are those which have met a standards test. BETA, EN and ASTM.

The New Zealand Pony Clubs Association is not recommending any brand or standard, this is not unique to New Zealand.

While the United Kingdom recommend BETA level 3 for cross country riding, information gathered has shown that this level might be too restrictive on smaller riders and would not allow riders to 'roll' when they fall. The type of protector that has 'chocolate slabs' would appear to give more flexibility and better protection to the smaller rider.

**Parents do need to shop around and find a body protector that fits the rider and is comfortable to wear.**

The rider should not just wear the body protector in competitions but also when training as this will allow the rider to get accustomed to wearing it and allows the material to mould to the riders shape.

It is recommended that body protectors be replaced approx every five years as the components do break down with wear and tear. Like all equipment, they should be stored carefully and not left in the sun, which would cause the inside components to break down quicker than necessary.

Remember the recommendation that a rider's body protector should not be more than 2% of their body weight.

We are concerned about 'young riders' being out on the cross country course to begin with, and consider it unwise to send a small child out on the cross country on of a 300 – 400 kgs animal. There are plenty of activities young riders can do without putting them in this situation.

There is no testing facility in NZ or Australia for body protectors, the cost is prohibitive to do so. BUT if someone knows someone with a spare million then we're sure NZ Safety Standards would be quite receptive to meeting them.

Information on Body Protectors can be found at

[www.beta-uk.org](http://www.beta-uk.org)

[www.phoenixperformance.com](http://www.phoenixperformance.com)