

Its never too late too start —if you’re still able to — to wear an approved equestrian safety helmet when you ride and then every time! Today’s approved equestrian riding helmets are more lightweight, ventilated, comfortable, stylish (with many color choices), and more affordable then ever before. Certified equestrian helmets start in the \$30-\$35 range. There are helmet designs tailored to both English and Western equestrians ideal for training, trail riding, show, eventing, and ranch work.

Lori West, Paso Fino owner in North Carolina comments: *“I trail ride with a helmet. When asked why, I reply, ‘Do you wear a safety belt when you drive?’ I think I’m a decent rider, but you never know what is around the corner. My husband, Greg, was once riding one of our most gentle horses, and a freak incident caused him to hit the ground, hitting his head. Luckily, he had on a helmet, and was just a little shaken. It could have been much worse. I was once told there are two types of riders: those who HAVE hit the ground and those who WILL hit the ground. I’ve been lucky so far, with all my ‘ground hitting’ being very minor.”*

The facts speak for themselves regarding the use of Equestrian Safety Helmets:

- Between 12 to 15 million persons in the United States ride a horse or pony every year.
- Most riding injuries occur during pleasure riding.
- The most common reason among riders for admission to hospital and death are head injuries.
- A fall from two feet can cause permanent brain damage. An average sized 14 hand Paso Fino

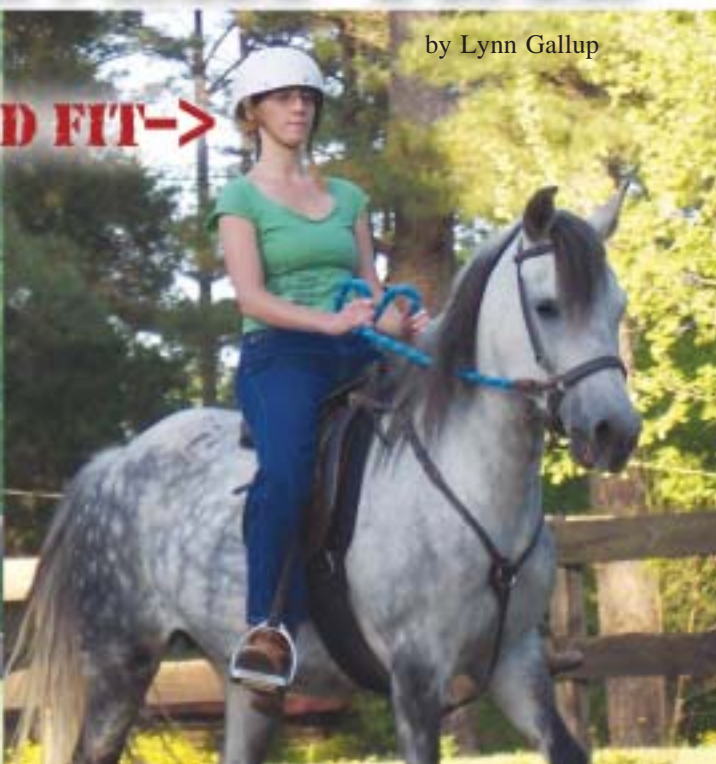
horse elevates a rider four feet or more above the ground.

- A human skull can be shattered by an impact of 7-10 kph. Horses can gallop at 65 kph.
- Head injuries account for approximately 60% of deaths resulting from equestrian accidents.
- A rider who has one head injury has a 40 percent chance of suffering a second head injury. Children, teens and young adults are most vulnerable to sudden death from second impact syndrome: severe brain swelling as a result of suffering a second head injury before recovery from the first head injury.
- Death is not the only serious outcome of unprotected head injuries. Those who survive with brain injury may suffer epilepsy, intellectual and memory impairment, and personality changes.
- Hospital costs for an acute head injury can be in the range of \$25,000 per day. Lifetime extended care costs may easily exceed \$3 million. There is no funding for rehabilitation outside the medical setting.
- Helmets work. Wearing ASTM (American Society for Testing Materials) and SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) approved helmets that fit correctly and have the chin strap firmly applied. Other types of helmets, including bike helmets, are inadequate for equestrian activities.

# EVERY RIDE - EVERY TIME

by Lynn Gallup

**<-GOOD FIT - BAD FIT->**



## every ride - every time

- Racing organizations require helmets and as a result jockeys now suffer less head injuries than pleasure riders do. The US Pony Club lowered their head injury rate 29 percent with mandatory helmet use. Britain's hospital admission rate for equestrians fell 46 percent after helmet design improved and they became in routine use.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Medical Association through the Committee on Sports Medicine, Canadian Medical Association, and the American Medical Equestrian Association recommend that approved, fitted and secured helmets be worn *on all rides by all* horseback riders.<sup>1</sup>

Properly fitted ASTM/SEI certified equestrian helmets can prevent death and reduce the severity of head injuries such as concussion sustained with riding accidents. SEI approved helmets have a proven efficiency of preventing or reducing the severity of head injury. SEI's program is a rigorous one, which includes annual compliance testing of all SEI-certified helmets, and stringent annual quality assurance audits at the manufacturer's plant to ensure SEI quality requirements are maintained. SEI's certification program for equestrian helmets has provided an important contribution to the safety of persons participating in horse sports and horseback riding. When the SEI label appears on equestrian helmets you should have the assurance that the helmet not only conforms to the ASTM F 1163 standard, but that the manufacturer consistently turns out quality products. Such manufacturers have voluntarily made a commitment to quality, to ensure that only safe products make it to the marketplace. All approved and certified ASTM/SEI brands of equestrian helmets are listed online at [www.SEInet.org](http://www.SEInet.org).

Linda York of Mississippi recalls a scary incident riding her Paso Fino mare: *"We had hauled our horses to Arkansas to ride in some very rocky, steep country. On the first ride out, I forgot to wear my helmet. I had someone take my photo in a streambed so that I could email it back to my husband and show him what fun we were having. His first reaction...where is your helmet?! The next day, I remembered it because he had made such an issue. Thank goodness I did, because I was pushed off my horse by a large limb and landed flat on my back in a dry streambed filled with large rocks! I felt the helmet bounce off the rocks. A month later, and my back still hurt from the fall, but my head was fine. The helmet was dented, and I am sure there would have been some damage to my head had I not had it on."*

As per horseback riding and children at events that don't require an equestrian helmet, it is often up to the parents and adults present on the scene at the time to oversee the situation and look out for the children's welfare. Adults have to weigh the risk of the kids' safety when riding ponies and horses.

Children are not capable of making those decisions, as they can't understand the consequences of an injury.

It is the adults' responsibility to look out for the children's best interest.

PFHA rules require approved safety helmets on youth riders aged 12 years and under any time riding on the showgrounds at a PFHA show event. PFHA/USEF Steward Fred Moretti tells: *"I had the experience at a large show last year to check the helmets of youth riders. Of thirteen riders, three were not approved. One stated, 'for bicycle riding' and the other two stated 'for costume only'. All three parents vowed, they did not realize they were not approved. At another show, I noticed a youth rider with a chinstrap that looked unusual, upon inspection. I found it to be broken and held together by a safety pin. Parents need to assume the responsibility for the safety of their children."*

All helmets are *not* alike, and the public must be protected from companies making false claims of compliance to a standard or claims that a helmet is SEI-certified, when it is not. When the SEI label appears on equestrian helmets you should have the assurance that the helmet not only conforms to the ASTM F 1163 standard, but that the manufacturer consistently turns out quality products. Such manufacturers have voluntarily made a commitment to quality, to ensure that only safe products make it to the marketplace. All approved and certified ASTM/SEI brands of equestrian helmets are listed online at: [www.SEInet.org](http://www.SEInet.org).

Carol Nudell of Utah recalls with sadness: *"My cousin's daughter slipped off while trotting on a horse and busted her head open, on concrete. She died in her mother's arms waiting for the ambulance. She would be here today if she had a helmet on. The child took lessons and always had to ride with a helmet, but this was 'just in the back yard'.... no one thought anything would happen...and nothing DID happen. The horse didn't spook, or bolt, or anything wrong." Carol explains further: "To me, it's like seeing a kid in a car that isn't in a car seat. I was an EMT for years and a safety officer for more years. I see kids riding horses without a helmet, and yes, the kids and their smiles are adorable. But I always think of my cousin's loss and her horrible guilt over an instant's lapse in good judgment, and a death that never should have happened."*

## every ride - every time

It's the law in New York State! New York is the first U.S. State to impose a helmet law:

*"No person less than fourteen years of age shall ride a horse unless such person is wearing a helmet meeting or exceeding ASTM F1163...Equestrian Standard. For*

*purposes of this section, "certified" shall mean that the helmet's manufacturer agrees to the rules and provisions of a system that includes independent testing and quality control audits, and that each helmet manufactured by such manufacturer is permanently marked with the certifying body's registered mark or logo before such helmet is sold or offered for sale. For the purposes of this section, wearing a helmet means having a helmet fas-*

*tened securely upon the head using the manufacturer's fitting guidelines for the particular model used."*

In 2003, USEF implemented a mandatory ASTM/SEI helmet rule for eventing. They encourage other disciplines to mandate the use of properly fitted ASTM/SEI helmets.

In conclusion, no helmet can protect against every head injury. However studies show a great reduction in both the number and the severity of injuries in those who use helmets every time they do ride. Nancy Strom, Paso Fino owner, in South Carolina sums it up this way: *"Life is like the lottery. All we can do is improve the odds with safety gear. It's worth it!"*

### Guidelines for A Proper Fit of an Equestrian Riding Helmet

1. Always wear an ASTM/SEI certified riding helmet.
2. When the helmet is rocked backwards and forwards, eyebrows and skin on the forehead should move with the helmet.
3. The back of the harness should be snug enough to keep the helmet from moving forward.
4. The helmet should be level and sit 3/4 to 1 inch above the eyebrows.
5. The helmet's side straps should meet just below and in front of your earlobes.
6. The throat strap should go under the chin, and should be snug, but not too tight.
7. A helmet should be replaced after a direct impact from a fall.

[www.tarlton.law.utexas.edu/dawson/amea/feb00nws.htm#fact](http://www.tarlton.law.utexas.edu/dawson/amea/feb00nws.htm#fact)  
[www.ameaonline.org](http://www.ameaonline.org)  
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# Patrimonio de Besilu

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