



January 2024 - 2025

Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Protective Headgear Policy Questions and Answers

1. Does the adult attendant in driving classes have to wear protective headgear?

No, **IF** the attendant is **over** 18 years of age. Adults are encouraged to wear protective headgear and may do so without judging discrimination.

2. Does protective headgear have to be worn in Grooming and Showmanship or Miniature Horse In Hand Trail classes?

No. ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use is required any time while riding or driving anywhere on the event grounds *and in all classes except for* Grooming and Showmanship(Open Division) and Miniature Horse In Hand Trail. *However*, if a youth is participating in Miniature Horse In Hand Trail at the Junior Horse Championship show, a helmet is required. In addition, Equestrians with Disabilities (EWD) classes all require protective headgear(including EWD Grooming and Showmanship). In all classes, the use of protective headgear intended for equestrian use is encouraged, and any exhibitor may wear protective headgear in any class without judging discrimination.

3. Is protective headgear required for in-hand junior horse show classes?

Yes. Protective headgear is required for *all* junior horse show classes (both in-hand and riding). This includes Miniature Horse In Hand Trail and Miniature Horse Jumping.

4. Is protective headgear required in Miniature Horse Jumping classes?

Yes. Protective headgear is required for *all* Miniature Horse Jumping classes at both the Junior Horse Championship Show and the State Show in Harrisburg.

5. Is protective headgear required at mounted meetings, trail rides, or other 4-H events?

Yes. ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use is required by all youth 18 years of age and under and by all 4-H members regardless of age when mounted or driving at any 4-H sponsored activity.

6. Are western style helmets required for western classes?

No. Any style ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use is allowed in western classes including western or English "show" helmets and schooling helmets. Helmet and harness must be properly fitted and the harness must be secured. It is the responsibility of the rider, or the parent, guardian or trainer of the 4-H member to see that the headgear is worn at the appropriate times, complies with the appropriate safety standards for protective headgear intended for equestrian use, and is properly fitted and in good condition.

7. What style protective headgear should be used for driving classes?

Any ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear of any style intended for equestrian use may be used.

8. Is protective headgear required when schooling outside the show ring?

All exhibitors (18 years of age and under and all 4-H members regardless of age) must wear ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use while riding or driving in designated riding or schooling areas, the show ring, and while riding or driving anywhere on the event grounds. Helmet and harness must be properly fitted and the harness must be secured. Any exhibitor violating this rule at any time will be prohibited from further participation until such headgear is properly in place.

9. Are bicycle or other helmets with a harness allowed?

No. Only ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use is allowed.

10. **Are hunt caps with a single chin strap acceptable as opposed to helmets with a harness attachment and chin strap?**

No. Hunt caps with only a chin strap are NOT acceptable. The only time a hunt cap may be used is in Grooming and Showmanship classes.

11. **How do show committees or event management enforce the rule?**

The headgear policy should be included in the show/event program or in the event rules.

The show committee or event management is not required to check or inspect protective headgear *unless* the appropriateness of such headgear is questioned. In such cases, the show committee or event management has the authority to inspect the headgear and enforce the rule as stated in the current PA 4-H Horse Show Rule Book or any applicable Supplement. Any exhibitor found to be in violation of the rule will be *immediately* prohibited from further participation until appropriate headgear is properly in place.

12. **If it is determined during a show class that an exhibitor is using inappropriate headgear, how should the show committee respond?**

If the show committee determines that the headgear is inappropriate and the exhibitor is in violation of the rule, the exhibitor will be disqualified from that class. The exhibitor should be *immediately* prohibited from further participation until appropriate headgear is properly in place.

13. **How should a show committee respond if it is questioned that an exhibitor is riding with headgear that is not in compliance with current rules (i.e. currently riding in a class or riding on the show grounds)?**

If it is brought to the show committee's or show official's attention that headgear is questionable, the show committee must *immediately* investigate and upon determination of accuracy of the report, must *immediately* stop the exhibitor from further riding until ASTM/SEI approved headgear is properly in place. During a show class, if the show committee determines that the headgear is inappropriate and the exhibitor is in violation of the rules, the exhibitor will be disqualified from that class. The show committee may investigate the appropriateness of headgear without a formal protest.

14. **Are helmets required for riders in 4-H sponsored pony ride fund-raisers?**

No, helmets are not required.

15. **Should counties or 4-H clubs buy helmets for use by 4-H members at 4-H sponsored events?**

No. Headgear should not be owned by counties or local 4-H clubs. Headgear should be owned by 4-H members or their parents or guardians.

16. **Are helmets required for riders 18 years of age and under in 4-H sponsored programs for urban youth?**

Yes, ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use is required.

17. **Many open shows NOT sponsored by 4-H have classes for 4-H members only. Are helmets required to be worn by 4-H members if they participate in such classes?**

The rule is in effect for 4-H sponsored shows and activities only.

18. **What wording can be used on horse show bills and other announcements to make people aware of the headgear rule?**

The following wording may be used: In 4-H sponsored horse shows and activities, all participants 18 years of age or younger and all 4-H members regardless of age are required to wear ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear intended for equestrian use while riding or driving anywhere on the competition or activity grounds. A copy of the entire 4-H Protective Headgear Rule is available from the _____ county office of Penn State Extension or in the current *Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Show Rule Book*.

19. **I have a 4-H horse club whose members annually ride their horses in a small community parade. Do members of the club have to wear protective headgear while riding in this parade, as it is not a 4-H-sponsored event or activity?**

The members will be riding as a 4-H club unit. The 4-H club's participation in the parade is considered a 4-H club activity. Therefore, the club members need to wear protective headgear intended for equestrian use. We would consider this a 4-H activity and our volunteer liability coverage to be in effect.

20. **May protective headgear be modified in any manner?**

No, other than to adjust fit with pads supplied by the manufacturer.

21. **May helmet covers be used?**

Covers may be used provided they can be removed for inspection of the helmet if necessary.

20. **Where can I find more information on ASTM/SEI approved protective headgear?**

Identification of ASTM/SEI approved headgear and proper headgear fit
US Equestrian Federation website at: usef.org - Go to Rules or Safety

Suppliers of ASTM/SEI approved headgear
seinet.org

Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA)
cha-ahse.org/

Equestrian Medical Safety Association (EMSA)
emsaonline.us/

American Association of Horsemanship Safety
horsemanshipsafety.com/

Virgina Tech Helmet Ratings
<https://www.helmet.beam.vt.edu/equestrian-helmet-ratings.html#>!

DO THE 5 POINT SAFETY CHECK

when selecting your riding helmet.

1. FRONT

The helmet should sit firmly in place about an inch above the eyebrows.

More than 1" = too small.
Less than 1" = too big.

2. SIDE

The straps on the side should meet just below and in front of your earlobes.

3. BACK

A snug-fitting helmet is best. The harness on the back should prevent the helmet from moving forward. Avoid using your hair to create a ... insert missing text on these lines.

4. THROAT

The strap under your chin should be snug but not tight. Tilt your chin up and down to ensure a proper fit.

5. TEST

Grasp the helmet with two hands and rock back and forth. The skin and eyebrows should move with the helmet.

Always choose to wear a certified riding helmet.

Helmet fit posters are available for free to PA 4-H clubs by ordering through publications. Please contact your county extension educator to order these posters.

Pennsylvania 4-H Protective Headgear Rule *

In all 4-H sponsored shows/activities it is compulsory for exhibitors 18 years of age or younger, including all 4-H exhibitors regardless of age, to wear properly fastened protective headgear which meets or exceeds current ASTM (American Society for Testing Materials) / SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) standards for equestrian use and carries the SEI tag.

Headgear must be properly fitted with harness secured and is required while riding or driving anywhere on the event grounds and in *all* classes *except* for Grooming and Showmanship(Open Division) and Miniature Horse In Hand Trail. The Junior Horse Project will require the use of approved headgear for *all* classes, *including* In Hand Trail.

Headgear may not be modified in any manner, other than to adjust fit with pads supplied by the manufacturer. Helmet covers may be used provided they can be removed for inspection of the helmet if necessary.

The show committee must immediately prohibit any exhibitor violating this rule at any time from further participation until such headgear is properly in place. During a show class, if the show committee determines that the headgear is inappropriate and the exhibitor is in violation of the rule, the exhibitor will be disqualified from that class and immediately prohibited from further participation until appropriate headgear is properly in place.

It is the responsibility of the exhibitor, the parent or guardian, and the trainer of the exhibitor to see the headgear is worn at the appropriate times, complies with the appropriate safety standards for protective headgear intended for equestrian use, and is properly fitted and in good condition. The show committee, show officials and volunteer leaders are not responsible for checking headgear worn for such compliance *unless* the appropriateness of such headgear is questioned.

Refer to the *PA 4-H Horse Program Protective Headgear Policy Questions and Answers* pamphlet for further clarification of the protective headgear rule. (Pamphlet available from county extension office or on the 4-H horse program website.) Additional information on approved protective headgear is available at: seinet.org or usef.org

The Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Development Committee, Pennsylvania State 4-H Horse Show Committee, and the Pennsylvania State University make no representation or warranty, express or implied, regarding any protective headgear, and caution exhibitors and their respective parents or guardians that death or serious injury may result despite wearing such headgear, as all equestrian sports involve inherent dangerous risk and as no helmet can protect against all foreseeable injuries.

In all classes the use of additional safety equipment is permitted, including a protective safety vest specifically designed for use in equestrian sport and any exhibitor may show with this equipment in any class without judging discrimination.

** Please be sure to check current rule book and/or any available supplement(s) for most current version of this and other relevant rules.*

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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