

# Does your hat fit

On-the-spot testing by *H&H* at an international show revealed some shocking results about our attitude towards hat safety, as we revealed in last week's issue. This week, we show you how to ensure that your hat passes muster

**A** riding hat is fundamental to safety. Yet an *H&H* survey at Royal Windsor recently revealed that 83% of the 30 riders tested weren't adequately protected. This mostly was because their hats were not fastened properly. And 47% of riders interviewed were wearing hats that didn't fit. What's more, of 93 riders approached, only 30 agreed to take part — some made excuses for opting out once they established what we were doing, others openly admitted: "I know my hat doesn't fit properly."

The most shocking finding was that hardly anyone fastens their hat correctly (see The issues that caused the most debate, right).

"Your hat can only do a good job if it's in the right place when you hit the deck," said Tricia Nassau Williams, British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) field officer and hat-fitting trainer, who, with her colleague Tina Rogers, provided the expertise on our team.

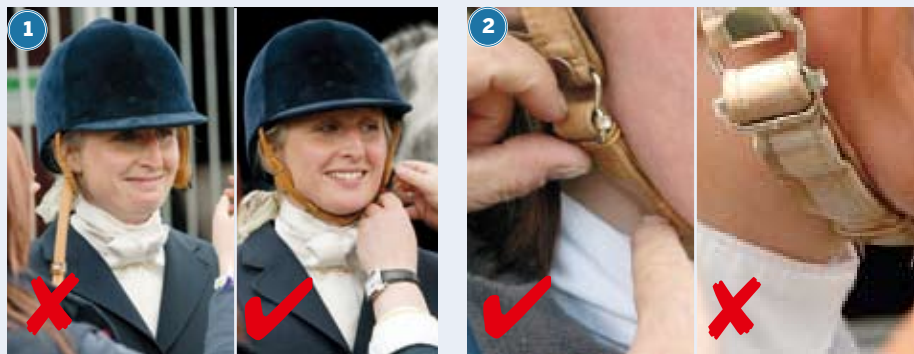
## How tight should the straps be?

ALTHOUGH 57% of the hats we looked at fitted the riders' heads, 83% had straps that were too loose, clearly hindering the protection.

The Pony Club riders we interviewed tended to have snugger harnesses. Many other riders

## HOW TO ENSURE YOUR HAT FITS

Some simple guidelines to determine whether your hat fits you correctly



1. It should sit level on your head, just above your eyebrows and the tops of your ears

2. The band around the harness must be positioned near the clip to stop it loosening

3. Your hat should not rock forwards, backwards or from side to side

with loose straps didn't know how tight they were supposed to be.

Apart from comfort, there seems to be a fashion, particularly among jump riders, to wear their chinstraps loose.

## Fitting the harness

MANY hat straps may have been tight enough when the hat was originally fitted, but have worn loose over time. This can happen because

riders position the loops at the wrong end of the harness strap to stop the extra piece of material from flapping around. In fact, these loops are supposed to sit snug to the adjustable fastening, to stop the straps from working loose.

Jennifer Hart, 22, from Great Missenden, Bucks, bought her Charles Owen hat from a tackshop the week before.

Tricia said: "It is as tight as it can be without being uncomfortable — the rider's eyebrows will

## Our experts tightened 87% of interviewees' harnesses, here's what three said:



“ This is the only hat I've had that doesn't move. I can't believe some people wear their harnesses so loose ”

Gemma Plumley



“ They didn't fit the harness [when I had this hat fitted] and I didn't know the loop was supposed to go right to the buckle ”

Jennifer Hart



“ I knew what size I was so went into the shop and plonked one on my head. I thought it would be good to get the straps checked ”

Susan Kiernan

# properly?



4. The jaw strap should only be loose enough to fit one finger inside it
5. Back straps should be tight enough to stop your hat tipping forwards
6. The hat should be close-fitting, but not uncomfortably tight
7. There should be a small space at your temples
8. The hat should fit all round the head without any large gaps

**If you suspect that your hat does not fit, you should visit a specialist hat-fitter as soon as possible**



## HAT STATS

### 97%

of riders wear a riding hat

### 36%

of riders buy either a riding hat or a body protector in a year

### 50%

of hats are bought from a specialist retailer — only 5% are purchased online

### £32million

estimated annual turnover of the hat and body protector industry

Statistics taken from BETA National Equestrian Survey 2006

## The issues that caused the most debate

Apart from unfastened harnesses these were:

**Disposing of a hat once it has been damaged**

**Glasses, hairbands and hairstyles influencing the fit of hats**

**Irregular shaped heads being difficult to fit**

**The top three excuses riders gave for having loose chinstraps**

**'It feels weird tight'**

**'It feels like I can't move my face'**

**'If you do the straps up any tighter I won't be able to talk'**

move when the hat is gently moved back and forth. The harness needs to be tighter though. The back strap often gets overlooked and owners need to achieve an awareness of care."

This includes carrying and storing your hat in its bag or box, rather than by the harness, which may become loosened.

Jennifer said: "They didn't fit the harness when I was at the shop and I didn't know the loop was supposed to go right up to the clip." **H&H**



**BETA hat experts Tricia Nassau Williams (top) and Tina Rogers make sure two riders' harnesses are correctly fitted to help prevent injury**



**The velvet of this hat was unscathed after its wearer was kicked in the head, but with the inner shell removed, you can see the crack inside**



**This hat has been impact tested, you can see the dent in the polystyrene. If it was struck again on the same spot, it would not absorb the impact**

## The science beneath the hat

HAVE you ever stopped to think how your hat works? We asked helmet designer guru Bill Vero, who designed Gatehouse HSI, to explain.

"A safety helmet consists of three layers," says Bill. "The outer shell made of fibreglass or plastic, the inner liner made of high-grade polystyrene and the comfort foam and head band. The outer layer absorbs the first wave of energy, diffuses and transfers it to the liner."

The inner liner consists of thousands of air

bubbles that burst on impact, slowing down the progress of the force reaching your head and brain. That's why manufacturers tell you that you should always replace your hat after a fall.

"Helmets have developed well," says Bill. "But there are still things we are working on. For example, the strongest point of a hat is the crown — but the crown needs to be flexible to prevent injuries like that of [*Superman* actor] Christopher Reeves."