

MOSA GUIDELINE

EQUESTRIAN SPORTS AND INJURIES IN A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

There will be a number of pupils in every MOSA school who ride horses. For some schools riding is an integral part of school life with equestrian sports playing a large part although every school will have pupils who ride either within or outside the school environment.

Riding-related injuries do occur and school doctors may see pupils who have sustained injuries or they may be asked to give advice regarding equestrian activities.

Competitive horse riding sports include: -

- dressage.
- endurance riding.
- eventing.
- reining.
- show jumping.
- point-to-point.
- polo.
- horse racing.
- carriage driving.

This guideline aims to outline some principles regarding equestrian-related injuries and to suggest available sources of information.

Statistics

- **number of horses** in the UK - **1.35 million** ¹.
- **number of horse riders** (people who have ridden at least once in the previous year) - **4.3 million** ¹.
- the **Pony Club** has over **32,000 members** in the UK alone.
- **1 serious injury** for every **350 hours** in the saddle ².
- **1 injury per hour** of cross country eventing ³.
- the **highest incidence of injury** occurs at the **highest levels of competition** ⁴.

Risks

- horses can travel up to speeds of 65 km/hr (40 mph).
- horses may weigh up to 550Kg (1200lb).
- rider's head up to 4m (13 feet) from the ground.
- horses kick with a force of 1.8 x body weight.
- horses can react suddenly, can become frightened easily and are sometimes unpredictable.

Mechanisms of injury

- most common is falling from the horse.
- also a rider may be kicked, trampled or bitten.
- about 3 out of 4 injuries are due to falling, the definition of which includes being crushed and being thrown from the horse.

Risk Reduction

Primary prevention

- course design and fence construction - all course designers and builders to be trained, certificated and listed - British Eventing.
- stride length between combination fences.
- frangible pins.
- rules – see individual bodies listed below.
- rider education – “safe” falls.

Secondary prevention

- use of personal protective equipment.

- **helmet** - which must be properly fitted and replaced after any fall or injury.

Pony Club – *“It is mandatory for all Members to wear a protective helmet manufactured to one of the minimum standards listed below. It must bear the CE mark and a quality symbol either the BSI Kitemark, the SAI Global symbol or the official Snell label with number. The CE symbol on its own is not sufficient to ensure consistent standard of manufacture. The PAS 015:1998 and the Snell E2001 meet higher impact criteria and therefore give more protection.”*

“For cross-country riding (over fences 0.80m high and above) (including Eventing, Tetrathlon, Hunter Trials) and Pony Racing whether it be tests, rallies or training, a jockey skull cap, with no fixed peak, must be worn. It is also strongly recommended that a jockey skull cap is worn for cross country riding even over lower fences.”

- **body protector.**

“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 members and their parents. It is recommended that a rider’s body protector should not be more than 2% of their body weight”

- appropriate **footwear** – only standard riding boots or jodhpurs with a fairly smooth, thin sole and a well-defined square cut heel should be worn. Trainers must not be worn.

- **avoid** wearing **loose clothing** and **jewellery**.

Tertiary prevention

- **trained medical professionals**
 - recognise trauma.
 - differentiate between in-hospital and outside hospital care.
 - appropriate paramedic support.
 - evacuation / extraction planned.
 - health care team – vets / horse ambulance.

British Eventing – *“It is recommended that the appointed doctor has been trained in pre-hospital emergency care. A list of medical cover providers is available from the British Eventing but some doctors from this list do charge a fee for their services. This qualification must be revalidated after not more than three years.”*

References

- ¹ *British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) National Equestrian Survey 2006.*
- ² *Firth JL: Equestrian Injuries. In Sports Injuries: Mechanisms, Prevention and Treatment. Schneider et al. 1985.*
- ³ *Strickland C: Equine Related Human Injuries. The Horse Interactive. October 2000.*
- ⁴ *Paix BR: Rider injury rates and emergency medical services at equestrian events. Brit J of Sport Med 1999; 33: 46-48.*
- ⁴ *McLain DA: USCTA Statistics and Trends. Years 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1995.*

JR Silver: Spinal Injuries resulting from horse riding accidents. Spinal Cord: June 2002, Volume 40, Number 6, Pages 264-271.

Useful websites

The Pony Club	http://www.pcuk.org/
British Eventing	http://www.britisheventing.com/
Hurlingham Polo Association	http://www.hpa-polo.co.uk/
Point-to-Point	http://www.pointtopoint.co.uk/
The British Horse Society	http://www.bhs.org.uk/
The Medical Equestrian Association	http://www.medequestrian.co.uk/
Doctors at Events	http://www.doctorsatevents.com/
British Showjumping	
http://www.britishshowjumping.co.uk/	

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