

Life of Your Body Protector

Your body protector must not be cut or altered by anyone but the manufacturer, as to do so could mean that it would no longer meet the standard. If this is found to have occurred then despite carrying the label, the wearer may not be allowed to compete in disciplines where the standard is mandatory.

Always check your garment for dents immediately after a fall or kick, as the foam will expand back into shape after 30 minutes. If there has been a dent then that area of the garment will no longer offer the same protection as before.

BETA recommends that Body Protectors are replaced at least every 3 – 5 years, depending on use, as the impact absorption properties of the foam may start to decline. Any garment bearing an old Level 5 (red), Level 7 (blue), Class 1 (green), Class 2 (orange) or Class 3 (purple) label will no longer be effective and should be replaced. In addition we would recommend that any garments bearing a 2000 Level 1 (black), Level 2 (brown) and Level 3 (purple) label should also be replaced as they will be between 3 – 14 years old and reaching the end of their life span.



Buying a Body Protector

Many BETA retailers stock BP's and should be qualified to fit them correctly. If in doubt ask to see their attendance certificate at a BETA safety training course. They will also be able to offer help and advice when required. A comprehensive list of BETA retail members can be obtained from the BETA Office.

The Manufacturer is required to provide instructions with each garment giving details on fitting, care, washing etc.

A full list of BP brands and manufacturers approved to the current standards is also available from BETA.



Anatomy of a Body Protector

1. Shoulder Protectors

These aim to protect the end of the collar bone. Material and fastening on other areas of the shoulder protectors are there to keep them in place. Research into eventing falls has shown that wearing BETA Level 3 shoulder protectors can reduce the risk of breaking a collar bone by up to 80%.



2. Outer Material

The foam is normally covered by fabric, which is usually sponge clean only. Make sure you check the manufacturer's instructions before cleaning.

3. Inner Material

Most BP's use 2 layers of PVC Nitrile foams, which are heat sensitive. They soften and mould to the contours of the body with the rider's body heat, making them more comfortable. The foam is often perforated to increase flexibility, reduce weight and increase and improve airflow.

Under no circumstances should BP foam be subjected to excessive heat e.g. drying it on a radiator.

Always check your protector for dents immediately after a fall or kick. The foam will expand back to its original shape 30 minutes after impact, but won't provide the same protection in the dented area as the ability to absorb impact in that area will have been lost. Some manufacturers do supply replacement panels however.

4. Weight

Generally, the lighter the foam the harder it is when not in use and the heavier the foam, the softer it is. Because most modern foams mould to the body, the difference in hardness is hardly noticeable when worn.

5. Fastenings

These can be zip, sliding buckle, clip or Velcro. This will depend on whether the design is tabard (over the head) or front opening.

6. Lining

Usually made of breathable mesh.

British Equestrian Trade Association
East Wing, Stockeld Park Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS22 4AW.
Tel: 01937 587062 Fax: 01937 582728
e-mail: info@beta-uk.org web site: www.beta-uk.org



BETA Guide to Body Protectors

Body Protectors

Body protectors are designed to offer protection to a rider by absorbing the high levels of energy created when falling off, being kicked or stood on by a horse. The British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) body protector standard sets the benchmark for safety and is recommended by all leading riding organisations and disciplines requiring the use of body protectors. A number of different styles are available, depending on the individual manufacturer and the design. Tabard (put on over the head with fastenings on the shoulder and done up around the waist) and zip-fronted are the most common, but there are a number of new styles emerging such as moulded garments, as technology continues to develop. It is important to try on a variety of styles before deciding what suits you the best.

Originally the standard was a 2 tier level of shock absorbency on a scale of 10. These level 5 and level 7 garments offered a much lower level of protection than that offered by modern garments. In 1995 the standard was revised to a 3 class system and these garments are now also considered obsolete.

BETA 2000 and 2009

In March 2000 the BETA 2000 standard superseded all previous standards and was then updated with a revision in 2009. Garments may now only be made to the 2009 standard. Garments to the 2000 standard may still be working their way through the market, but you should seriously consider replacing your garment if it has a 2000 label.

To carry the BETA label, garments must meet the performance standard EN13158 and be certified to the PPE directive shown by the CE mark on labels. Additional security is offered by requiring all manufacturers to re-test their approved garments annually to ensure long-term consistency in the quality of manufacture and of the shock-absorbing foam used in the construction of the garment. BETA acts as a quality assurance standard.

EN13158

Provides the technical specification for equestrian body protectors and sets the level of shock absorption required to be offered, controls the area of the body that must be covered by the protector, ensures that there are minimal gaps between the foam panels and that closures are safe. This is a one off test at the beginning of a garments life provided no changes take place to any materials or patterns.



This mark is neither a quality mark nor a standard in itself but is a mandatory declaration to show when garments conform to the European directive for all Personal Protective Equipments (PPE). Under the PPE Directive safety equipment must bear the CE mark showing compliance with the appropriate European safety standard, in this case the EN13158/2009.

Levels of Protection

There are three levels of protection to cater for different activities and users. The materials used absorb and spread impact thereby lessening or reducing the injury sustained and the difference between the 3 levels are due to the differing thickness of the foam used.

No Body Protector can prevent serious injury in certain accidents, but you can improve your chances of staying safe and reducing the severity of injuries by making the right choice.

BETA Standard BP's and SP's will carry one of the following BETA labels indicating the level of protection offered.

Level 1 Black Label

Protectors providing a lower level of impact protection that is only considered appropriate for licensed jockeys while racing.



Level 2 Brown Label

Protectors providing a lower than normal level of protection that is only considered appropriate for use in low risk situations. These DO NOT include riding on roads or other hard surfaces, riding over jumps, riding young or excitable horses or riding while inexperienced. No garments are currently made to this level.



Level 3 Purple Label

Protectors providing a level of protection that is 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 soft tissue injuries and bruising, and prevent a limited number of rib fractures.



Level 3 body protectors should still be worn whenever an air vest is worn, whatever the activity.

Shoulder Protectors (SP's)

These aim to protect the end of the collar-bone which is often injured when falling on the shoulder. The BETA Standard is designed to test against a fall on the point of the shoulder which is stronger than the rib cage and a different shape. For this reason SP's are subject to a different test, even when an integral part of a BP.

How To Fit

Correct fitting is essential for a BP to do its job properly. A visit to a properly trained retailer who has attended a BETA Safety course is recommended.

- ❑ Take waist, chest and waist to waist measurements (taking the tape measure from the front of the waist over the shoulder and down the back to the waist).
- ❑ Use the size chart in the user instructions (attached to all new BETA Standard garments) to find the correct size.
- ❑ If the measurements are at the top or bottom of a size range, try to find the two closest sizes to establish which is more comfortable.
- ❑ Try on over light clothing or the clothing normally worn under the BP. Heavier garments (eg rainwear) are best worn over the BP.
- ❑ Adjust the garment by its fastenings at the shoulders and waist to fit snugly.

If one cannot be found that fits comfortably some manufacturers offer a made to measure service.

Correct Fit

Wear the protector for at least 5 minutes in the warmth to let the heat of your body soften the foam and allow it to mould to the contours of your body.

- ❑ The garment should fit securely and reasonably tightly to avoid movement during activity and to ensure that it is in place in the event of an accident.
- ❑ The top of the BP should just reach the top of the sternum (breastbone) at the front and the prominent bone at the base of the neck at the back.
- ❑ The front of the BP should not be less than 25mm below the ribcage.
- ❑ The BP must fit all the way round the torso.
- ❑ The BP and SP between them should cover the collarbone.
- ❑ The bottom of the back of the protector should not touch the saddle when mounted (some manufacturers offer short fittings or a shortening service).
- ❑ Check it is comfortable to wear in all simulated riding positions.

Some garments made to BETA 2000 and all garments made to BETA 2009 will have coloured velcro sections on the fastenings. If any coloured Velcro is showing after fitting this indicates that the BP does not fit correctly and a larger size should be tried.



Correct fit



Incorrect fit