

Other Points

The Body Protector (BP) must not be cut or altered by anyone but the manufacturer and to do so could mean that it would fail to 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.

BETA recommends that BP's are replaced at least every 3 years, as the impact absorption properties of the PVC nitrite foam may start to decline then. Any garment bearing an old Level 5 or 7 label will no longer be effective and should be replaced.

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.

In addition, BETA Standard BP's and SP's will carry a BETA coloured label and a BETA swing ticket. One Swing ticket will cover both BP's and SP's.

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



Anatomy of a Body Protector

1. Shoulder Protectors

These aim to protect the end of the collar-bone only.

Material and fastenings on other areas of the shoulder protectors are there to keep them in place. Michael Whitlock, UK Medical Advisor on the European Committee on BP's, investigated 50 falls onto the shoulder during eventing competitions.

Among the 30 fallers who were not wearing shoulder protection there were six fractures to the collar-bone and two dislocated shoulders. There were no fractures or dislocations among the 20 who were wearing shoulder pads to BETA Level 3 standard.

2. Outer Material

If it is a washable fabric make sure the pads are removable otherwise the outer should be wiped clean where pads are not removable.

3. Inner Material

Most BP's use PVC nitride 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.

NOTE: Check a BP for dents immediately after an accident. 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 impact absorption will have been lost. Some manufacturers do supply replacement panels however.

4. Weight

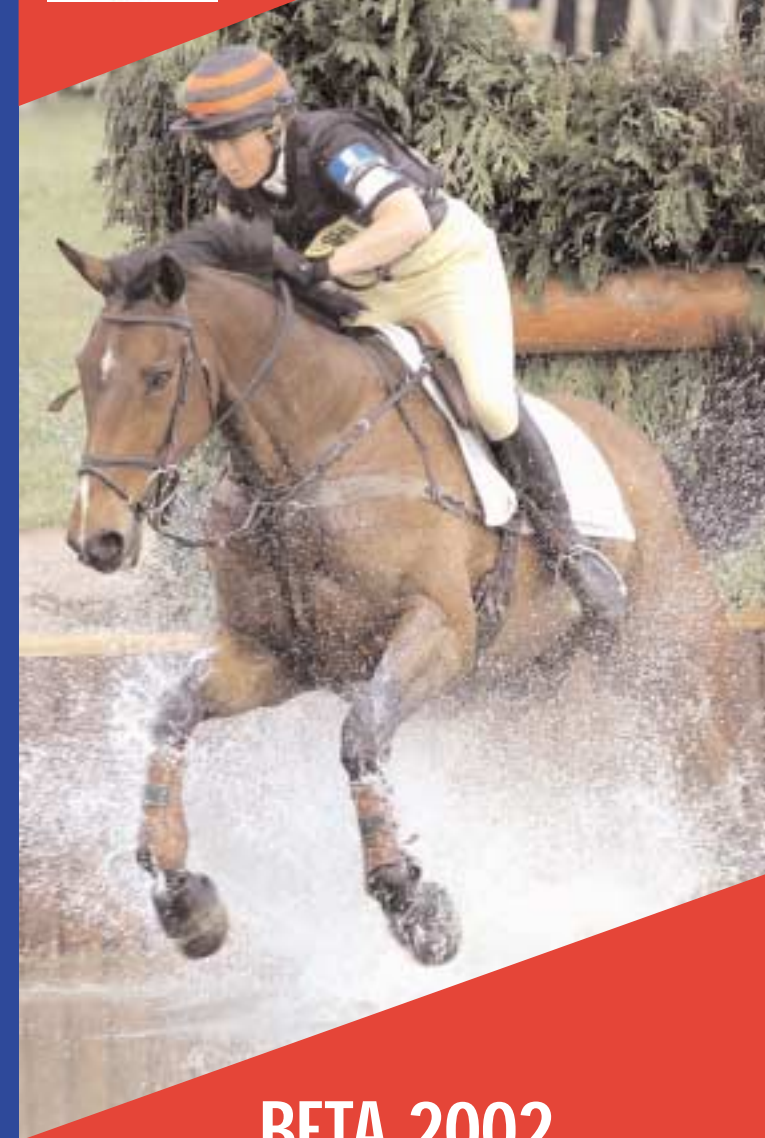
Generally, the lighter the foam the harder it is when not in use and the heavier the foam, the softer it is. Because most modern foams mould to the body, the difference in hardness is hardly noticeable when worn.

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.



BETA 2002

Body & Shoulder Protector Standard

Explained

Background

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) 2000 Standard for Body and Shoulder Protectors is recommended by the British Horse Society, British Eventing, BHS Riding Clubs and the Pony Club.

The first standard for BP's was conceived by a farsighted manufacturer who was concerned about unmonitored garments flooding the market which offered little protection.

Under BETA's banner a Committee of riding organisations, doctors and manufacturers was formed, with a riders representative and retailer joining later. This group agreed the standard with technical advice from RAPRA.

Originally the standard was a 2 tier level of shock absorbency on a scale of 10. In 1995 the standard was revised to a 3 class system because of the legal requirements of the European Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Directive which became law on 1 July 1995.

Since then it became illegal to make any PPE which does not carry the CE Mark. The revised Standard offered considerably enhanced performance compared with previous garments.

BETA 2000

In March 2000 the BETA '95 Standard was superceded by the new BETA 2000 Standard that meets all the requirements of the European Standard EN 13158:2000. In addition manufacturers must 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.

The Standard, which is subject to regular review, sets the levels of shock-absorption offered, controls the area of the body that must be covered by the BP and ensures that there are minimal gaps between the foam panels.

Levels of Protection

There are three levels of protection to cater for different activities and users.

No BP 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.

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.

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.

Shoulder Protectors (SP's)

Riders often suffer injuries to other parts of the body when falling on the shoulder.

The BETA 2000 Standard is also 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.

When SP's are fitted the BP protector shoulder "strap" may not require any included foam.

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 have coloured velcro sections on the fastening. If any coloured velcro is showing after fitting this indicates that the BP does not fit correctly and another size should be tried.

