

CAN YOU HELP WITH THIS SURVEY?

Dear Horse Owner

The University of Glasgow and the Institute of Animal Health are examining ways to prevent the production and spread of infectious diseases of horses and donkeys in Great Britain. We are appealing to you, as a responsible horse or donkey owner, to help us by spending a few minutes completing our online questionnaire at www.survey-monkey.com/s/horseownersurvey

Only you can supply us with accurate and detailed information about the location and movements of your horse, or horses under your care/management. This information is vital for us to improve current prevention and control strategies for infectious diseases (such as African Horse Sickness) which could have a major impact on equine health welfare in Great Britain.

The questionnaire will take 15 minutes to complete. This survey should be completed only once by an individual family member. The information you provide is completely confidential. Your information is extremely important to us and we are grateful for your participation. We are happy to answer any questions you might have about this survey. Please write, telephone, or email using the contact details right.

Thank you for your assistance.

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BODY PROTECTORS

THE BENEFITS OF A BODY PROTECTOR

Passionate about body protectors, I was delighted to see an article 'Keep safe' in the November/December issue of *British Horse*.

I do feel the complete protection of Point Two's body protector, which has been adopted by many riders and uses air-bag technology to give extra protection

during a fall from a horse, including neck protection.

It is attached to the pommel of the saddle, and when you come off the saddle, the rip-cord instantly inflates the jacket. It wears like a loose gilet and is exceedingly comfortable. I have worn one for six months and the two falls I had in that time resulted in no injury, and none of my usual stiffness or soreness.

The Pro Air does not have a BETA rating as it does not

provide protection during groundwork, but costs about the same as a year's insurance for your horse. Just imagine lying in a spinal unit as a new quadriplegic following a fall from your horse... wouldn't you wish you could turn the clock back and buy one?

I have no conflict of interest – I just think all riders should wear one.

**DR CHARLOTTE FLEMING,
VIA EMAIL**

Hardy, BHS Senior Executive (Safety), says:

We have commented positively on the benefits of wearing air-bag body protectors for all equestrian activities.

To achieve the safest protection possible, body protectors must be worn with a body protector compliant with EN13158 BETA rating, not alone.

It must be forgotten that no safety vest will protect a rider against a fall. A BETA working party is currently up to establish recognised

standards for air-bags and this has received the full support of all manufacturers of body protectors and air jackets.

I agree wholeheartedly with Dr Fleming's comment regarding the price of safety – this would also apply to those riders who do not consider it necessary to wear a riding hat. Working with those who have suffered a head injury as a result of a fall without any head protection shows how important it is to take precautions.

ONLINE LIFE CAN BE A 'TWEET'!

I must admit we were quite amused reading Mrs Sams' letter in the November/December issue of *British Horse* regarding Facebook, Twitter and anything else we would refer to as 'the online life'.

At Abbeyview Equine, we specialise in supporting equestrians in their use of these forms of media. Every day we work with those who are achieving more because they have embraced the online life. We felt the need to set the balance and come to the defence of those who do find online interaction valuable.

Of course, there are always concerns with anything new. When steam trains were invented, commentators thought passengers would be killed by the stress of travelling faster than 20mph! Today, millions travel by train without giving it a second thought. The technology has helped us and become part of our routine.

The internet has barely been around for 20 years, and it's only in the last 10 that we've actually started to make it work for us. It's very new, so we can understand why some people are wary of it.

Why is the internet so good? There are many good books on the subject, and you probably need something of that length to answer the question properly. For now, let's just say we don't overstate the situation when we call the internet a total revolution in human communication. We are able to achieve more in terms of information sharing, processing, collaborating, keeping in touch and doing business than we have ever been able to do before.

Yes – there are those who would use the web for nefarious ends – but let's keep this in perspective. There are those who use pen and paper, phones, cars, aeroplanes and pretty much any other technology invented for nefarious ends. We believe the positives overwhelmingly outweigh any negatives. Equestrians around the world are now able to network and communicate, sharing experiences and gaining rich insights which can help us all.

Video tutorials alone are becoming a vital and cost effective way to exchange guidance on everything from tacking up to reversing with a horse box. Life online is invaluable in so many ways – we couldn't hope to summarise them here.

We're not talking about an all-or-nothing situation. Who doesn't like to leaf through *British Horse* in a nice armchair with a coffee? The web simply brings something new – and used in the right way can contribute rather than taking away from quality of life for all of us.

I recently spoke at BETA's annual conference on how equestrian businesses of all sizes can harness social media to efficiently market their business online. For those of you who'd like to know more you can see videos of the talk at abbeyviewequine.com/social

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