

Helmet Policy

Effective October 1, 2006, the state policy reads (changes from 2005-06 year are in **bold**): A certified equestrian helmet with safety harness fastened in place is required in over fences classes **and gymkhana events, activities and practice sessions**. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian of the 4-H member to see that the headgear worn complies with such standards and is in good condition. The State 4-H office encourages the use of ASTM certified/SEI approved safety helmets in all equine events. Protective headgear may be used in all classes and shall not be discriminated against.

The first point of clarification is to define the use of the word “gymkhana.” It generally refers to horseback speed events (timed or un-timed) that do not use livestock. Events that usually fall in this category of events include, but are not limited to: barrel racing, pole bending, keyhole race, stake race, rescue race, pony express race, etc. Events that are not intended to be included in the new policy are events such as calf roping, team roping, goat tying, and team penning that may be timed but use livestock.

The second point of clarification that needs to be made is in regard to the words “events, activities, and practice sessions.” That wording refers to anytime a 4-H member is performing at an event; or even practicing as an organized 4-H horse project or group--a helmet must be worn in all over fences and gymkhana activities. The question has been raised, “What if a 4-H horse leader does not require their members to wear a helmet at practice sessions?” **Horse project leaders need to be aware that if they encourage or even allow members not to wear helmets while performing or practicing over fences and gymkhana activities, those leaders may be putting their leader status in jeopardy.**

4-H agents are not expected to be the “helmet police.” However, if problems arise with the implementation of this policy, they will be expected to take appropriate action as stated in bold in the above-mentioned paragraph.