

17 ESSENTIALS FOR EVENTING



With the first event of the season on the horizon, examine your equipment for safety and replace aged, worn or damaged items.

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Gear up for the challenges of the competitive season with new products designed to keep event riders safe and stylish.

By Georgia Kalmoutis

Your anticipation has been building since a seemingly endless winter finally gave way to spring. Your horse is responding well to a step-up in training. And you're doing your part to ramp up your fitness level, too. It's all about being ready for your first event. The date is prominently noted on your calendar.

As part of your preparation for the season opener, why not take a

few moments to give your equipment a good going-over as well? It's only prudent to replace aged, worn or damaged items so they don't become a hindrance or imperil your safety once you have entered the arena or are headed out on course.

From helmets to safety vests, gloves and more, manufacturers are offering innovative designs that combine state-of-the-art materials and construction techniques with details that have great aesthetic appeal. The result is items that not only will help to safeguard your well-being, they'll also assist in maximizing your perfor-



mance and keep you looking professional no matter which phase of competition—dressage, cross country or show jumping—you're facing.

Helmets

1. Charles Owen's **4Star** is a deep-fitting skull cap. High-tech aramid fibers embedded in its tough resin matrix provide improved crush resistance. A quick-release buckle fastens the patented harness system. A frontal air channel combined with CoolMax® mesh enhances cooling across the forehead and speeds the evaporation of sweat. Ten ventilation slots facilitate airflow. ASTM/SEI certified. Black or silver; sizes 6–7½; \$226; www.charlesowen.com.

2. The **Avalon**, a low-profile competition helmet by Troxel, is packed with performance features: steel vent inlays, a moisture-wicking head liner, shatterproof

visor and a hardened matte finish as well as a self-adjusting system that provides a custom fit for every ride. ASTM/SEI certified. Black; sizes S–L; \$169.95; www.troxelhelmets.com.

3. The **Matrix** by Devon-Aire features the company's new patented Conehead technology to absorb impact and distribute it in a lateral motion away from the head. Two layers of foam provide additional protection. A dial-fit retention system accommodates a range of sizes while a versatile ventilation system can be opened or closed to adjust to weather conditions. ASTM/SEI certified. Black or gray; sizes S–L; \$99.99; www.devonaire.com.

4. The **Defender Air** by One K™ is new to the United States. Its liner has three hidden air pockets that inflate via a concealed pump until the desired fit is

achieved. Other features include a washable, moisture-wicking, anti-microbial liner, nine air vents, synthetic suede-covered outer shell and a padded harness with hook-and-loop adjustment. ASTM/SEI certified. Black matte; sizes S–XL; \$309.95; www.onekhelmets.com.

5. A special ventilation system on International Riding Helmets' **Eventer** allows air to flow into the helmet, over the head and exit out the back via two vent ports to keep the head cool and comfortable. A leather-covered harness extends to the nape of the neck. Lacing at the back of the helmet allows it to be adjusted for a snug fit. ASTM/SEI certified. Black; sizes 6½–7; \$208.95; www.irqhelmets.com.

6. The **Contender** by Lami-Cell is a low-profile helmet designed with a face-flattering, detachable visor. The er-

Helmet-Fitting Tips

When you try a helmet, place it firmly on your head with the brim or front edge horizontal to the ground. Without attaching the harness, check that

- the front of the helmet rests an inch above your eyebrows.
- when you move the helmet from side to side and back and forth with one hand on top of it, your forehead and eyebrows move with it.
- when you bend over, it doesn't fall off.
- the back of the helmet reaches or covers your occipital bump (the bony lump at the base of your skull that you feel when you run your hand up the back of your neck).



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A correctly fitted helmet should sit so the brim is horizontal to the ground and about an inch above your eyebrows. When you move the unfastened helmet, your eyebrows should move with it.

If you find a helmet that fits snugly in the front and the back of your head, but there are gaps on the sides, you need an oval or long-oval model. If you experience the opposite—snug on the sides but loose at the front and back, ask the customer-service agent to help you find a rounder model.

Once you find a helmet that satisfies all the above criteria, wear it around the store (or your house, if you mail-ordered) for 15 minutes. The body heat emanating from your head will change the fit slightly, usually for the better. If you experience any pain, uncomfortable pressure or red marks on your forehead, keep shopping.

Don't attach the harness until the helmet has passed the above tests.

To meet safety standards, manufacturers make helmets with jaw straps, rather than chin cups or leather straps worn on the point of the chin, because jaw straps are more secure. They are designed to keep the helmet in place during two potential impacts—a second bounce of the head on the ground or a kick.

To work properly, the jaw strap must be adjusted so that it is in constant contact with both sides of your jawbone. If you wear the jaw strap flapping an inch or so below your chin, don't count on your helmet protecting you in a fall. (Note: All of the extensive testing we require of helmets is done on what's known as a head form—a head-shaped metal object that has sensing instruments inside to measure impact. During trials, a helmet's jaw strap is properly adjusted so that it's in contact with two metal bars that simulate each side of the jawbone.)

Remember, the better your helmet fits, the better it will protect you. And the more comfortable it is, the more likely you are to wear it.

*Excerpted from an online article by **Drusilla Malavase**, equestrian safety proponent and co-chairman of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) Committee on Protective Equestrian Headgear. To read the full story, go to www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com.*

gonomic shape offers protection for the back of the skull and includes a pad for added support at the neck. Additional features include seven high-flow air vents and a removable, washable liner. ASTM/SEI certified. Black, brown or navy; sizes small (6–6½), medium (6½–7¼), large (7¼–7¾); \$59.99; www.partrade.net.

Vests

7. The Airowear **Outlyne** is a zip-front vest with chest, waist and shoulder adjustments. Soft and flexible, it molds to the contours of the body without relying on



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body heat. Mesh lining and perforated foam facilitate airflow. High-tech materials absorb and spread impact. Black/gray; sizes: teen T1, T2 and T2 Slim, \$299, women L3–L7 and L3 Slim–L5 Slim, men M4–M7, \$332; www.airowear.co.uk.

8. The USG **Flexi** body protector uses a block-structure system of foam panels to absorb shock. Lightweight, it molds around the body for a close, comfortable fit that does not hinder rider performance. Hook-and-loop fasteners at the waist and shoulder allow for a custom fit.

Its stain-resistant polyester cover wipes clean. Black; sizes: adult S–XL, \$238, kids M–XL, \$219; www.klselect.com.

9. The **Helite Airbag Vest** from Shire's Equestrian inflates in less than 100 milliseconds to help protect the wearer against injury from most of the rotational falls that happen with horses. The vest is made of 3D Air Mesh material that facilitates airflow and circulation. A semi-hard outer back panel provides ad-

ditional protection. Priced according to color and size: black, S–L, \$549.99, LL (L wide)–XLL (wide), \$591.50; green, royal, navy, brown or red, S–L, \$649.99, LL (L wide)–XLL (wide), \$699.99; www.shiresequestrian.com.

10. Tipperary Equestrian's **Eventer Pro 3015** features lightweight, high-density, ventilated foam that conforms to a rider's shape yet allows air to circulate to cool the body. Cut to permit a full range of arm motion and flexion at the hip, the body protector features two innovative technologies that allow it to move with the wearer, mimicking his movements, for increased impact protection. Black, green, blue; sizes XS–XL in teen, youth and adult; \$349; www.phoenixperformance.com.

11. The **Kontakt 5** body protector by Charles Owen meets the latest and most comprehensive safety standards. Tapered shoulders and rounded chest-protection panels offer a slim appearance. Ventilation holes are covered in Coolmax® fabric for breathability and comfort. Special design details allow freedom of motion and prevent the garment from riding up. Black, navy, brown, green, red, purple or pink; sizes: child S–XL, adult S–L; \$266–332; www.charlesowen.com.

12. The fully integrated air bags of the Point Two **Soft Shell** vest inflate within one-tenth of a second—roughly the blink of an eye—when a rider separates from the saddle. A canister of CO₂ stored at the front of the vest is activated by the release of a lanyard clipped from the vest onto an attachment on the saddle. The vest may be worn with a conventional body protector. A lifetime warranty and servicing program are available. Black; sizes XS–XL; \$675; www.pointtwousa.com.

Gloves & Accessories

13. The Heritage **X-Country** glove offers a comfortable custom fit with a stretchy mesh panel across the back of the fingers and hand and an adjustable strap closure.



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Durable, synthetic grain leather on the palm allows sensitive grip and control of the reins. Unique construction removes the bulky seam and material between fingers for unrestricted movement in wet or dry conditions. Black, black/gray or black/brown; sizes 6–12; \$37.95; www.heritagegloves.com.

14. The **V-Skin Swarovski** glove by Samshield uses ultra-perforated lambskin leather for maximum airflow and lightweight comfort. A suede fabric base is fingerprinted with silicone to facilitate grip while Lycra increases flexibility and ensures a secure fit. For flash, 130 Swarovski stones are set into the strap. Black, brown, blue or white; sizes 6–8; \$79.50; www.samshield.com.



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15. Classic and sporty, the lightweight **Advanced Sport Glove** from Roeckl is made of Lycra and spandex for a close, comfortable fit. The digital suede palm is hardwearing and ensures a good grip of the reins. A broad Velcro® tab secures the gloves at the wrist. Black, black/red, black/white, brown, navy or green; sizes 6–10½; \$40; www.roeckl.de/en/.

16. Nunn Finer's **Easiest Spur Straps Yet** are made of rubber and come in 10 different colors to coordinate with you and your horse's cross-country gear. Easy to maintain, they are an alternative to common leather spur straps, which can dry and crack. Hot pink, orange, purple, royal blue, black, brown, Kelly green, red, white or yellow; \$11.95; www.nunnfiner.com.

17. The golf-grip-style handle of Roma's **Event Crop** is comfortable to grasp and flexible. Plus, it stays secure in the hand. The shaft is made of wrapped synthetic leather strips. The oval-shaped flapper is leather. Navy/blue with black handle and flapper; 18 or 21 inches; \$13.99; available at local Roma dealers and online. 📱