1. Policy Statement

The University, through its Occupational Health and Safety Policy, is committed to ensuring that each member of the University carries out safe working procedures at all times and takes reasonable care to prevent personal injury or injury to others.

Horse riding activities are undertaken by farm staff during the course of their work, and by students who are participating in coursework or in University sport competitions. The use of head protection during these activities is considered of primary importance in order to minimise the risk of injury for horse riders.

It is University policy that all staff and students who ride a horse, should wear appropriate head protection and undertake recommended work practices as specified in the following Guideline.

The aim of this Policy and Guideline is to minimise or eliminate the following health and safety risks for students and staff undertaking horse riding activities:

- head injury as a consequence of falling from or being struck by a horse or livestock
- occupational exposure to sunlight
- heat stress.

2. Equestrian Helmets

Helmets designed for the purpose of horse riding should comply with Australian Standard 3838 2003 and should carry the Standards Australia mark as illustrated below.
The equestrian helmet should be correctly fitted and adjusted to ensure that the helmet does not slide forwards or backwards, and to maximise comfort.

3. Protection from Sunlight

3.1 Work scheduling
To minimise occupational exposure to sunlight, horse riding activities should be avoided when practicable between 10 a.m.–2 p.m. It is during this period that the sunlight is most intense. When horse riding activities are not being performed or when preparation and completion tasks are being undertaken, shade should be used and reflection from brightly coloured or shiny surfaces should be avoided.

3.2 Personal Protection – Hard Hat Brims
To ensure adequate protection from sunlight whilst wearing the helmet, it is recommended that a hard hat brim is attached securely to the helmet. The brim should be at least 8 cm wide and have a wire support around the perimeter to prevent drooping, as this may limit the peripheral vision of the wearer. Fitted hat brims which hinder peripheral vision should be removed from the helmet and be replaced with a well supported brim.

3.3 Personal Protection – Sunscreen
A high SPF, broad-spectrum sunscreen should be used in conjunction with a hard hat brim. Directions for applying sunscreen should be followed as over-application of sunscreen can contribute to heat stress. The Occupational Exposure to Sunlight guideline should be noted for more detailed strategies for minimising sun exposure and this can be obtained from the Occupational Health and Safety Unit.

4. Minimise Heat Stress
To minimise heat stress and avoid heat exhaustion, continuous horse riding should be interspersed with rest breaks or light activities on a regular basis, i.e. 10 minutes of light activities (e.g. rest or feeding livestock) per every 50 minutes of horse riding.

Drinking water should be made available to horse riders at regular intervals. When practicable it is preferable for horse riders to drink small amounts of water frequently i.e. one cup every 30 minutes. The water should be kept cool and placed at a convenient location.

Strategies to avoid heat exhaustion are critical during the summer months.

For further information regarding suppliers of helmets, brims and sunscreens and discussion regarding modified work practices please contact the Occupational Health and Safety Unit on ext. 52365.
5. Responsibilities

5.1 The University: is responsible for providing the resources to staff for implementation of these guidelines.

5.2 Departments: are responsible for recognising situations where the guidelines may apply, ensuring the guidelines are implemented in their departments and advising the Occupational Health and Safety Unit of difficulties in implementing the guidelines.

5.3 Supervisors: are responsible for ensuring that individuals under their control understand the risk, comply with the guidelines and should ensure that staff are supplied with appropriate expendable resources such as equestrian helmets, hard hat brims, and sunscreen during horse riding activities.

5.4 The Director, Occupational Health and Safety: is responsible for advising the University Occupational Health and Safety Council on the implementation of these guidelines.

5.5 The University Occupational Health and Safety Advisers: are responsible for providing advice to Departments on the health risks associated with horse riding activities and for assisting Departments in implementing the guidelines, including advice on the selection of equestrian helmets, hard hat brims, and sunscreen.

References:

Australian Standard 3838 - 2003, Lightweight Protective Helmets (For Use In Pedal Cycling, Horse Riding And Other Activities Requiring Similar Protection), Part 3 – Helmets For Horse Riders, Standards Association of Australia.

Documentation of the Threshold Limit Values and Biological Exposure Indices, Sixth Edition,

Volume II, American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists Ohio, 1991.

Disclaimer

These guidelines were designed for use within the University of Queensland. Others are welcome to use them. Although the information contained in the guidelines is believed to be reliable and current, we make no guarantee and assume no responsibility as to their absolute correctness for all circumstances or for their adaptation outside the University of Queensland environment.

You may reproduce or adapt this information provided the original meaning is preserved and copies are not offered for sale. The University of Queensland shall be acknowledged in the copies.