



ASSISTANT STARTER SAFETY GEAR SURVEY (UPDATE: AUGUST 2006)

An update to the TRA Assistant Starter Safety Gear Survey (November 2005) was conducted in August 2006 and produced 19 track updates as well as two new track responses. The responses from 2005 were retained for purposes of this capsulation for a total of 36 tracks, which represents 90 percent of the TRA membership.

Of the 19 updated track responses, seven have now made the use of flak jackets mandatory gear for their gate crew. The noticeable trend from last year is the increase in flak jacket use (i.e. 58 percent of all responses in 2006 indicated flak jackets are worn opposed to the 23 percent of responses in November 2005).

The 2005 survey, combined with updated responses, produced the following results:

| No. of Tracks,% | Safety Gear Worn by Asst. Starters |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 21 – 58% | Flak Jackets/safety vests |
| 9 – 27% | Protective gloves |
| 9 – 27% | Safety Boots |
| 7 – 21% | None |
| 6 – 18% | Safety Helmets |

Like the 2005 survey, the update sought anecdotal instances when assistant starters have refused or declined to wear safety equipment. Five tracks responses composed the following list of concerns with **wearing flak jackets**, specifically:

- ✓ Too hot and the risk of heat stroke outweighed the risk of other bodily injury
- ✓ Cumbersome
- ✓ Restrictive of movement, mobility
- ✓ Other safety issues in horse handling (i.e. getting caught up or tangled with the horse)
- ✓ One of the five tracks indicated lack of mobility initially was a concern, but flak jackets have since been accepted by the gate crew.

One new response indicated the gate crew complained about helmet use, citing the equipment was uncomfortable and ill-fitting.