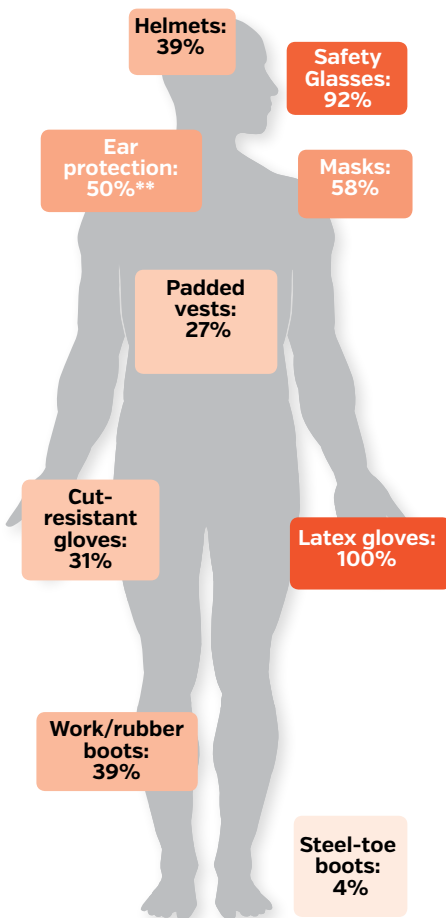


# Personal protective equipment (PPE) provision: what are we learning from farms and workers?

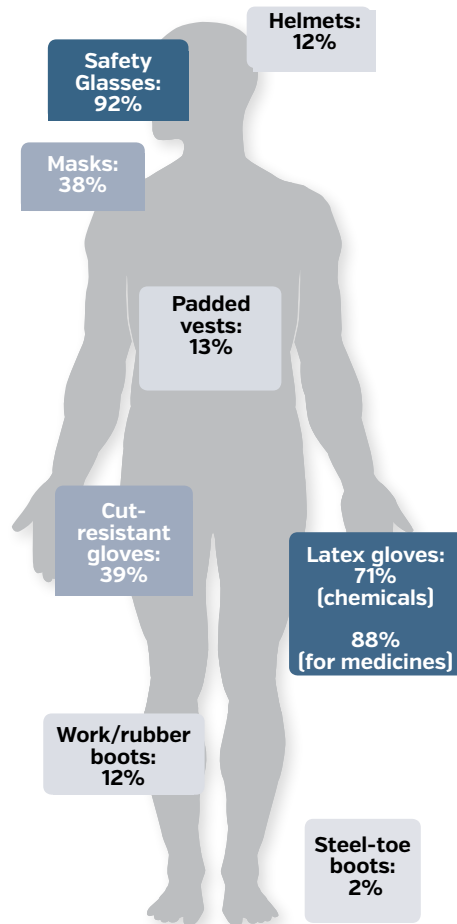
This is a part of a series of research briefs reporting the findings from the Thoroughbred Worker Health and Safety Study. **The goal of this brief is to describe managers' provision of and policies pertaining to personal protective equipment (PPE).** Data presented in this brief come from in-depth interviews conducted with 26 farms through the Thoroughbred Farm Interview as well as interviews conducted with 225 Latino Thoroughbred farm workers who participated in the Thoroughbred Worker Health and Safety Study.

## PPE provision by farms, access reported by workers

### Farm provision (N=26) reported by farms



### Worker access\* reported by workers



*“You know some stuff can be prevented if you’re not wearing tennis shoes...but, truly at the income level that most of our people are at, to have to go out and buy a pair of boots doesn’t make the job worthwhile.”*  
– Large Farm Manager

### Thoroughbred Worker Health & Safety Study

**WHO?** Researchers at the University of Kentucky and University of Maryland, guided by Industry and Community Advisory Councils, funded by CDC/NIOSH

**WHAT?** Research study to identify farm safety & health challenges, work organization & farms’ best practices

**WHEN?** 2011-2016

**WHERE?** Thoroughbred Farms

**HOW?** Interviews with farm representatives & workers

**WHY?** To improve worker health & safety and reduce costs for farms

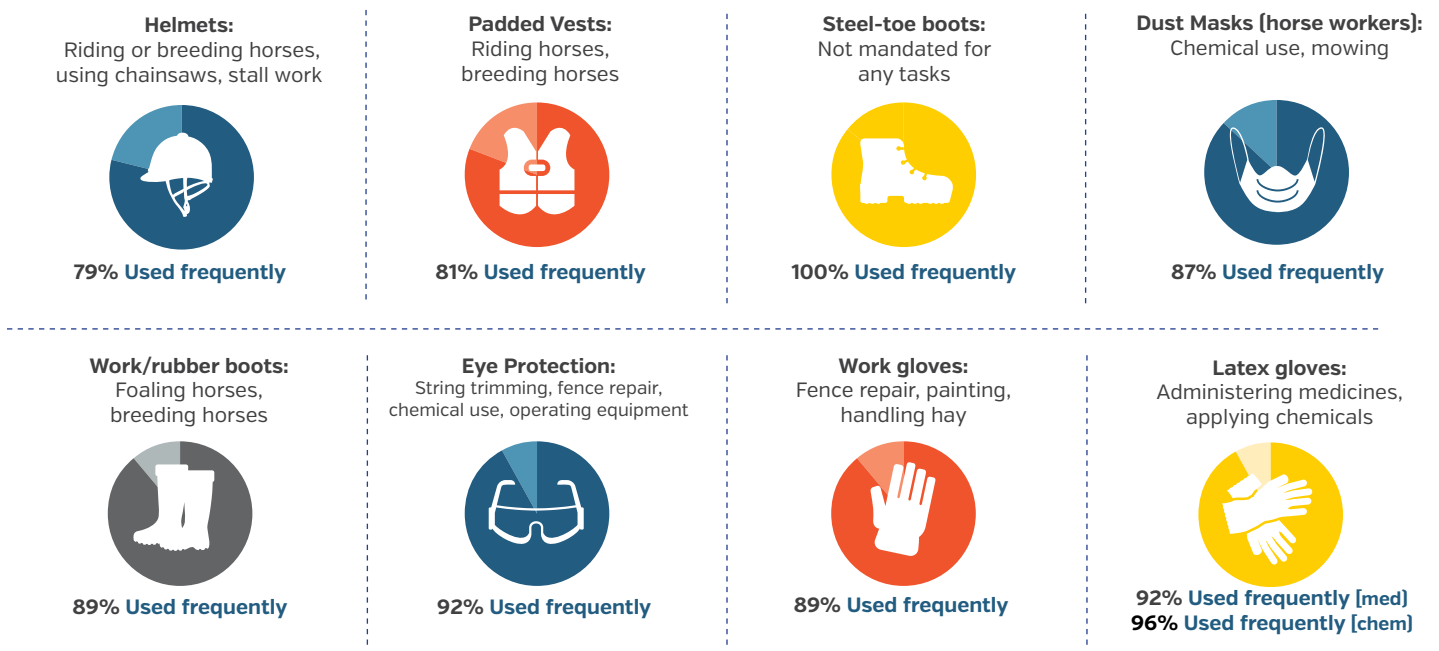
\*% for workers are among those doing tasks for which the PPE is recommended [i.e., horse workers and use of masks/respirators].

\*\*Workers were not explicitly asked about access to ear protection.

*[Helmets and padded vests are] mandatory...the workers are all glad actually. We had a guy, a mare struck him in the head last year with his helmet; he did have a neck sprain and the helmet actually cracked, but if he hadn’t had the helmet on I can’t imagine what would’ve happened...”* – Medium Farm Manager



## Tasks for which PPE was mandated, and percentage of workers who used it frequently\*\*:



**Other PPE mandated by farms included:** **Hearing protection:** String trimming, Operating equipment; **Paper suit/coveralls:** Applying chemicals; **Reflective vests:** Mowing/string trimming along road; **Lead vests:** X-rays

\*\*Data about mandated tasks were gathered from farms. Data about frequency of use were gathered from workers. Frequently = often or almost always used the PPE when the PPE was relevant for the job and when the worker had access to it.

## Management Tips and Resources

- **Know the risks associated with the chemicals and medicines used on the farm.** Material Safety Data Sheets describe these risks and recommended handling procedures. MSDS sheets are available online ([www.msds.com](http://www.msds.com)) and should be available to workers at all times.
- **Use injury data to guide safety initiatives.** One farm is pilot testing a program to reimburse workers for the purchase of work boots to help prevent foot injuries based on data showing their prevalence. Workers may choose boots that are comfortable and fit correctly.
- **Official policies on PPE use may make enforcement easier.** Compliance was not reported as an issue for those managers that mandated and enforced PPE use.
- **Initiate conversations about PPE with workers.** Even if workers feel comfortable with you, don't assume that they are comfortable asking for PPE or volunteering an opinion about the work environment.
- **Experience and knowledge is important to reduce injury/illness, but is not a substitute for PPE.** Unexpected events can happen to anyone; PPE can prevent or reduce the severity of potential injuries.
- **PPE that doesn't fit well doesn't work well.** NIOSH provides many free videos in English and Spanish on how to fit test masks and other PPE at [www.osha.gov/video/respiratory\\_protection/fittesting.html](http://www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/fittesting.html)
- **Store dust masks in airtight containers** to prevent damage or contamination from rodents and discard them once soiled or damaged.
- **Always provide PPE next to the equipment or task for which it is intended.** For example, place the ear plugs directly beside the lawn mower and safety glasses by the weed eater (string trimmer).
- **PPE can lessen the impact of an exposure, but it is also important to prevent dangerous situations from occurring.** Eliminate distractions and discourage workers from using cell phones, listening to music on ear buds, etc., while working with horses.
- **Access information about safety equipment related to horse riding through the Saddle Up Safely program:** [www.saddleupsafely.org](http://www.saddleupsafely.org).

## Acknowledgements

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