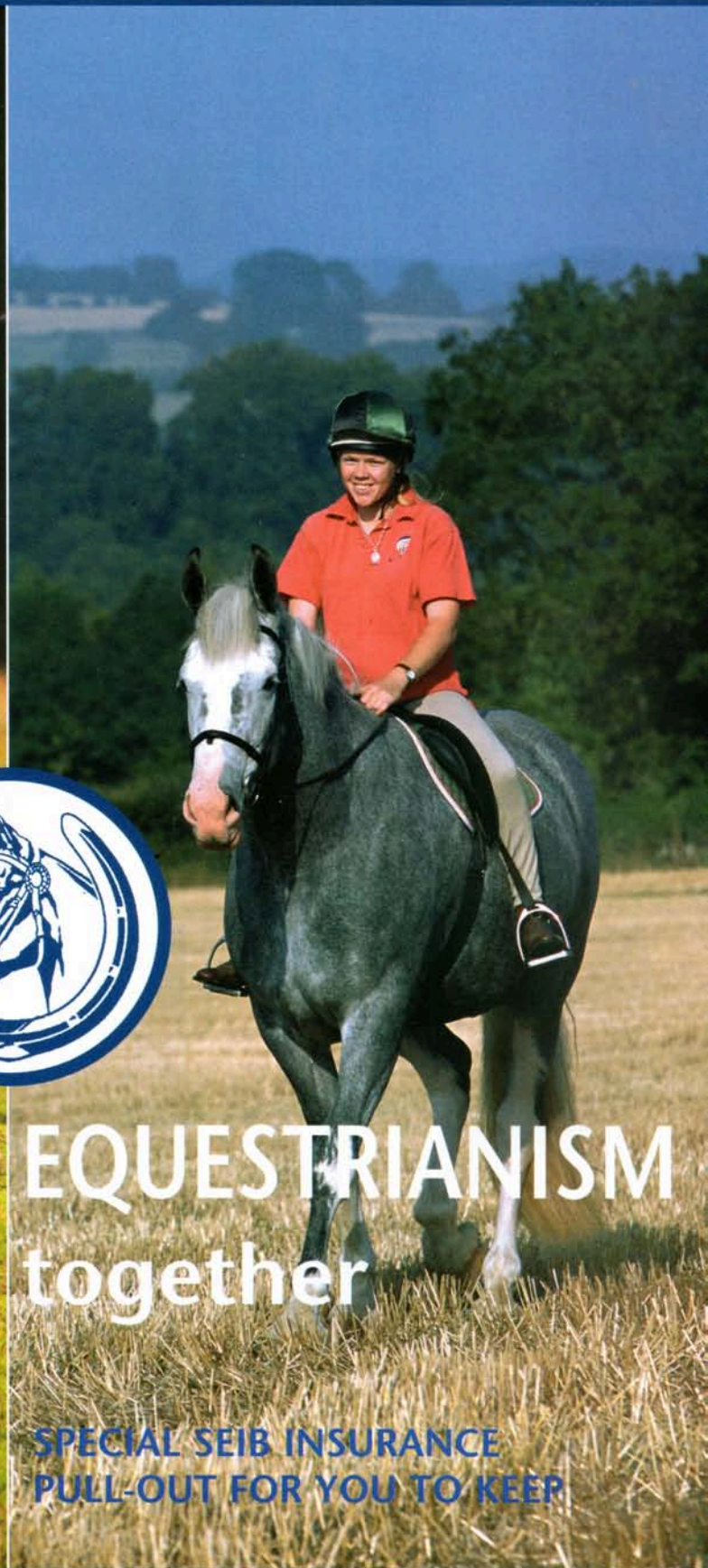
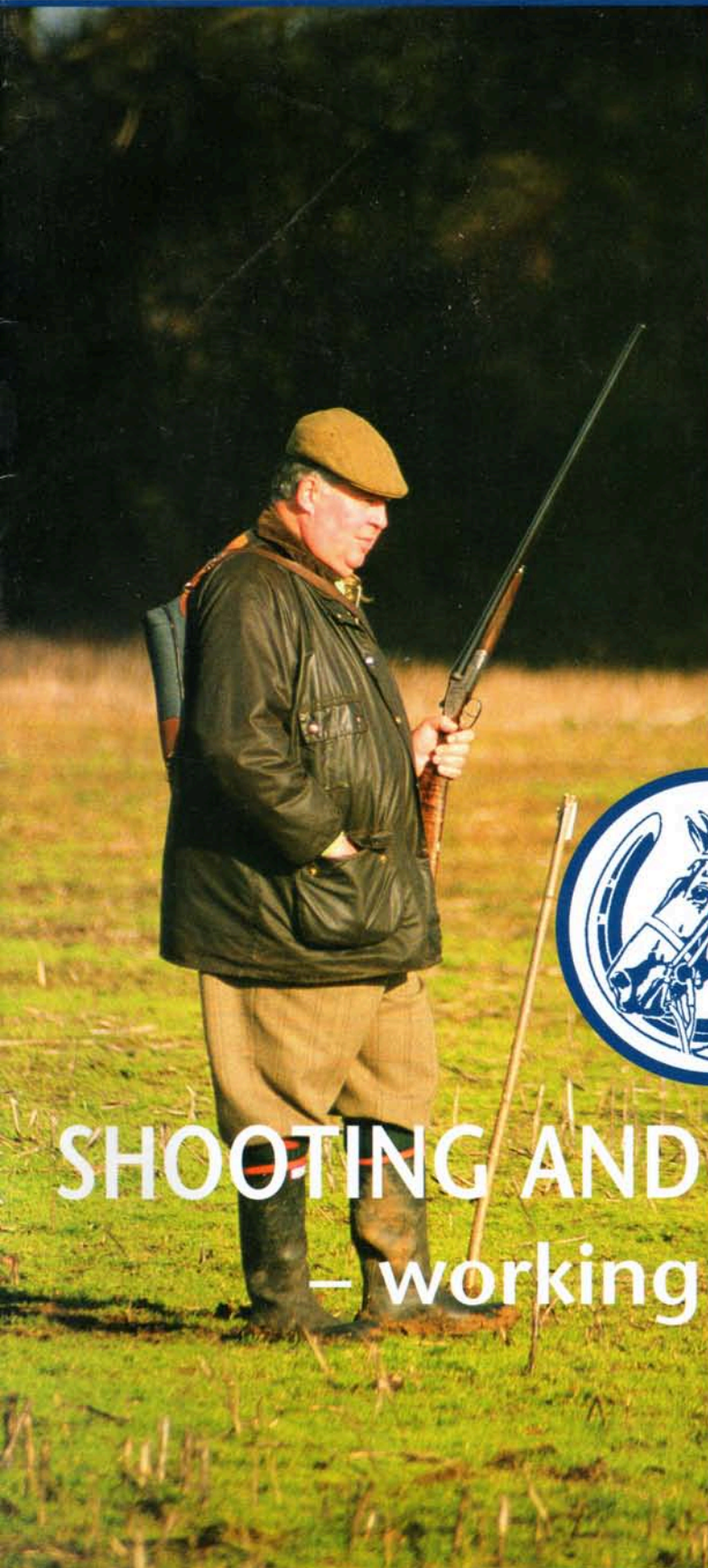


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BET Exam Report from Spain

Qualifications for people working in Equestrian Tourism; Trekking and Trail Riding Centres are becoming more popular, not only in England and Ireland but in Europe also. The first Equestrian Tourism examination of 2003 was held in Epona, Spain on 15 and 16 February. There were fourteen candidates – six from Portugal, one French, and seven Spanish.

All candidates had attended a one week refresher course at Epona prior to the exam; this enables them to become familiar with the trek routes and brush up on their knowledge and a unique opportunity to share experiences when dealing with clients of different nationalities and cultures. All fourteen candidates entered both the Assistant Ride Leader (100 per cent pass) and the Ride Leader (86 per cent pass) examinations.

Candidates are not only examined on their stable management theory and practical ability, but also on communication skills, trek and ride management (with special

emphasis on safety), and basic instruction. Epona is an ideal centre for this examination, as a large part of their business is from Equestrian Tourism, dealing with first time, novice and experienced riders who not only want to enjoy their horse riding but also want to experience the culture and history of Spain. Examiners Bob Weatherley and Grainne Sugars watched the candidates during normal morning duties of feeding, mucking out, and grooming. They were then examined while preparing horses for the ride out and on assessing and giving basic instruction to the clients prior to the trek. The realistic situation of the examiners riding out with the candidates gives the opportunity to see how they cope with live situations with different riders, over different types of terrain, including crossing rivers. It was interesting to see candidates discussing with the examiners subjects such as olive growing, wine making, and the old traditions of how young bulls are selected for bull fighting. This

gave an insight to the candidates' ability to communicate and entertain clients. Because of the practical nature of this exam it easy to see why employers in Spain and Portugal are keen to gain this particular qualification for their trail leaders.

One candidate said at the end of the day, "Although I was nervous, I enjoyed the day and learnt a lot. The exam was professionally run, and because it was so practical, there was a good working atmosphere. I will recommend it to others in our industry."



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