

4-H BITS

HUNT SEAT EQUIPMENT

- A. In all English classes, an English snaffle (no shank), Kimberwick, Pelham and/or Full Bridle (with two reins), all with cavesson nosebands and plain leather brow bands must be used.
- B. In reference to mouthpieces, nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar). Solid and broken mouthpieces must be between 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter, measured 1" from the cheek and may have a port no higher than 1 1/2". They may be inlaid, synthetic wrapped, including rubber or plastic or incased, but must be smooth. On broken mouthpieces only, connecting rings of 1 1/4" or less in diameter or connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2", which lie flat in the horse's mouth, are acceptable. Snaffle bit rings may be no larger than 4" in diameter. Any bit having a fixed rein requires use of a curb chain. Smooth round, oval or egg-shaped, slow twist, corkscrew, single twisted wire, double twisted wire mouthpieces and straight bar or solid mouthpieces are allowed.
- C. In the jumping class only, mechanical hackamores may be used.

SADDLE SEAT EQUIPMENT

- A. A double bridle consisting of snaffle and curb is preferred and must suit the horse.
- B. No horse shall be shown with a snaffle bit only, breast plate, tie-down or martingale.

Acceptable English Bits (The list is not all inclusive of what is permitted)



Dee ring snaffle



Egg butt snaffle



Pelham



Loose ring snaffle



Full Cheek - Slow Twist



Full Cheek Snaffle



Full cheek - cork screw



Kimberwicke



Double jointed snaffle with hinges and the single rolling piece is not smooth. This bit is LEGAL

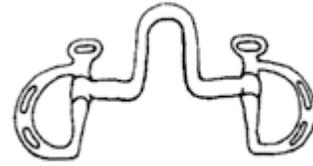


Double Twisted Wire

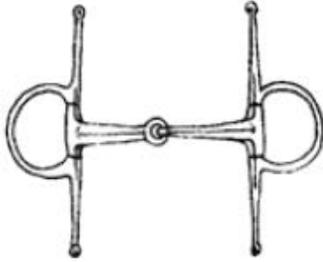
Unacceptable English Bits



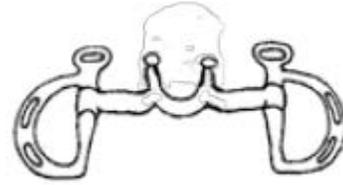
Illegal snaffle. Snaffle is not “rounded”; is too narrow, and its rings are too small



Excessive port



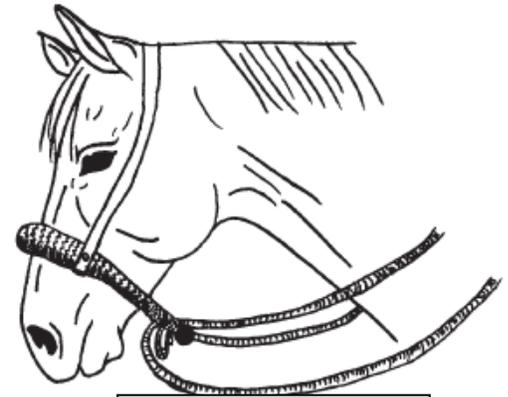
Triangular Mouth



Prong Bits

WESTERN EQUIPMENT

- A. In all western classes, horses will be shown in a western saddle and appropriate bridle, snaffle bit or Bosal for the duration of the class. A western saddle is a common type of saddle distinguished by a large noticeable fork on which there is some form of horn, a high cantle and large skirts. Silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. **Horses 5-years-old and younger may be shown in a snaffle bit, Bosal, curb bit, half-breed or spade bit. Horses 6-years-old and older may only be shown in a curb bit, half-breed or spade bit.** When a curb bit is used, a curb strap or curb chain is required, but must meet the approval of the judge, be at least one-half inch in width and lie flat against the jaw of the horse. Curb chains cannot be tied to the bit with string or cord. A broken strap or chain is not necessarily cause for disqualification.
- B. References to Bosal mean the use of a flexible, braided rawhide, leather or rope Bosal, the core of which may be either rawhide or flexible cable (figure). A Bosal must use a complete mecate rein, which must include a tie-rein. Absolutely no rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered. Horse hair Bosals is prohibited. This rule does not refer to a so-called mechanical hackamore.
- C. References to snaffle bits in western performance classes mean the conventional O-ring, egg-butt or D-ring with a ring no larger than 4" in diameter.
- The inside circumference of the ring must be free of rein, curb or headstall attachments which would provide leverage.
 - The mouthpiece should be round, oval or egg-shaped, smooth and unwrapped metal. It may be inlaid, but smooth or latex-wrapped.
 - The bars must be a minimum of 5/16" in diameter, measured one inch in from the cheek with a gradual decrease to center of the snaffle.
 - The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece, connecting ring of 1 1/4" or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" measured top to bottom, with a maximum length of 2" , which lies flat in the horse's mouth, is acceptable.
 - Optional leather strap attached below the reins on a snaffle bit is acceptable.
- D. References to a bit in western performance classes mean the use of a curb bit that has a solid or broken mouthpiece, has shanks and acts with leverage. All curb bits must be free of mechanical device and should be considered a standard western bit. A description of a legal, standard western bit includes:
- 8 1/2" maximum length shank to be measured as indicated in the diagram on page . Shanks may be fixed or loose.
 - Concerning mouthpieces, bars must be round, oval or egg shaped, smooth and unwrapped metal of 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter, measured 1" from the cheek. However, wire on the sway bars (above the bars and attaching to the spade) of a traditional spade bit is acceptable. They may be inlaid, but must be smooth or latex wrapped. Nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar), such as extensions or prongs, including upward prongs on solid mouthpieces. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece, connecting ring of 1 1/4" or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2", which lies flat in the horse's mouth, is acceptable. (See figure on how to measure a curb bit).
 - The port must be no higher than 3 1/2" maximum, with rollers and covers acceptable. Broken mouthpieces, half-breeds and spades are standard.
 - Slip or gag bits, and donut and flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable.
 - A curb bit must be used with a curb strap or curb chain properly attached so as to make contact with horse's chin



A properly fitted Bosal

Bosals are permitted in any class on a junior horse five years old and under. Bosals are rounded in shape And constructed of braided rawhide or leather and must have a flexible nonmetallic core attached to a suitable headstall. No other material of any kind is to be used in conjunction with a Bosal, i.e., plastic, resin, glue, steel, metal or chains (Exception: smooth plastic electrical tape is acceptable if applied in a smooth, untwisted manner). There must be approximately 3/4" between the nose and the Bosal. The Bosal will be no larger than 3/4" in diameter at the cheek and will flex easily. Attached reins may be of hair, rope, or leather.



Smooth electrical tape is legal



Latex or bandage material wrap is ILLEGAL.

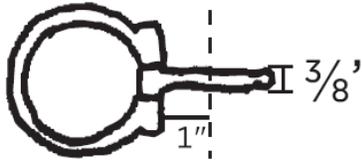


Sheepskin wrap is ILLEGAL



"Pencil" Bosal -- legal for schooling when used with a bit as a cavesson. Illegal in judged classes

Standard snaffle bits are permitted in any class on a junior horse five years old and under. A standard snaffle is defined as a center jointed single rounded, unwrapped smooth mouthpiece of 5/16" to 3/4" diameter metal as measured from ring to 1" in from the ring with a gradual decrease to the center of the snaffle



How to measure a snaffle bit



Diameter of bit is measured at the rings or cheeks of the mouthpiece

The rings may be from 2" to 4" outside diameter of either the loose type, eggbutt, dee or center mounted without cheeks



Dee Ring Snaffle



Eggbutt Snaffle



Center Mounted Snaffle



Loose ring Snaffle

Curb chains and leather chin straps may be used but must be flat and at least 1/2" in width and lie flat against the jaws of the horse.



Attachment of curb strap below where reins would be attached
- LEGAL.



Legal curb chains

ILLEGAL CURB CHAINS



Not 1/2" in width. The narrower a chain, the more severe it is. A narrow chain has a higher probability of cutting the horse.

No wire, rawhide, metal or other substance can be used in conjunction with or as part of the leather chinstrap, or curb chains



Has round bar welded on the inside of the chain. The bar is narrow and stiff and makes the chain too severe



Has bumps welded on the inside surface of the chain. The "bumps" cause the chain to be too severe



Chinstrap has a metal bar sewn inside, making it stiff under the chin



Chinstrap has tacks on the inside

Rounded, rolled, braided or rawhide curb straps are prohibited.



Round – curb strap

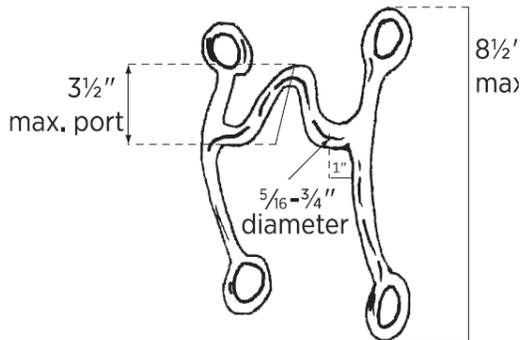


Braided – curb strap

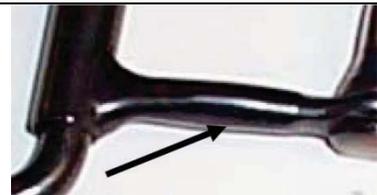


Rawhide – curb strap

Curb Bits



How to Measure a Curb Bit



The mouthpiece will consist of a metal bar 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter, as measured 1 inch in from the shank



Bars may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped. *Note: this mouthpiece is LEGAL*



Rollers attached to the center of the bit are acceptable, and may extend below the bar. *Note: this mouthpiece is LEGAL*



Nothing may protrude above or below the mouthpiece (bar) such as extensions, prongs or rivets designed to intimidate the horse. The very short, smooth, rounded rivets used to join the mouthpiece together and extend a tiny bit below the bar of the bit will not intimidate a horse. *Note: this mouthpiece is LEGAL*



This bit is often referred to as the Mickey Mouse bit. The port on this bit meets all of the requirements to be legal. The two balls at the top of the port do not violate the “no prongs” rule. The “no prongs” rule addresses prongs above or below the mouthpiece (bar) designed to intimidate the horse. *Mickey Mouse bit – LEGAL*

Jointed mouthpieces are acceptable and may consist of two or three pieces and may have one or two joints. A three-piece mouthpiece may include a connecting ring of 1 1/4” or less in diameter or a connecting flat bar of 3/8” to 3/4” (measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2”), which lies flat in the mouth, or a roller or port as described herein.



Jointed with bar – LEGAL



Jointed with ring – LEGAL



Jointed with port – LEGAL



Jointed with roller – LEGAL

The port must be no higher than 3 1/2” maximum with roller(s) and covers acceptable. Jointed mouthpieces, half breeds and spade bits are standard.



Half-breed - Legal



Spade – LEGAL style & length



This style of curb bit is legal for use in the Western division as long as the shank length and mouthpiece meet the rule requirements



This is a swivel mouthpiece bit. At various times this bit has been legal and other times illegal. The port on this bit stays still when the reins are pulled. This bit is effective on horses that “gap.” This bit has allowed some older horses with mouth problems to continue showing. Swivel mouthpiece – legal

ILLEGAL WESTERN BITS



Double jointed snaffle with hinges and the single rolling piece is not smooth.



This snaffle is illegal because it has “full cheeks”



Snaffle is not single, not smooth, not center-jointed and not 5/16” in diameter



Snaffle is not “rounded”; is too narrow, and its rings are too small



The shank is 9”



Bits with prongs or other protrusions can be very severe and can cause damage to the horse’s tongue.



ILLEGAL due to height of port



Slip or gag bits, rigid donut mouthpieces and flat polo mouthpieces are prohibited.



This type of bit is used as a training device. It puts pressure on the corners of the mouth, not the bars of the mouth. It would be very rare to see anyone try to show a horse with this type of bit.



Roping bits with both reins connected to a single ring at center of cross bar shall not be used. Reins must be attached to each shank

- E. Except for Bosal/snaffle bit classes or junior horses shown with Bosal/snaffle bit, only one hand may be used on the reins, and the hand must not be changed. The hand is to be around the reins; index finger only between split reins is permitted. In trail, it is permissible to change hands to work an obstacle. Violation of this rule is an automatic disqualification.
- F. Whenever this handbook refers to romal, it means an extension of braided or round material attached to closed reins. This extension shall be carried in the free hand with a 16-inch spacing between the reining hand and the free hand holding the romal. When using romal reins, the rider's hand shall be around the reins with the wrists kept straight and relaxed, the thumb on top and the fingers closed lightly around the reins. When using a romal, no fingers between the reins are allowed. The free hand may not be used to adjust the rider's length of rein in any reining class. During reining, the use of the free hand while holding the romal to alter the tension or length of the reins from the bridle to the reining hand is considered to be the use of two hands and a score of 0 will be applied, with the exception of any place a horse is allowed to be completely stopped during a pattern.
 - a. The romal shall not be used forward of the cinch or to signal or cue the horse in any way. Any infraction of this rule shall be penalized severely by the judge.
- G. Junior horses competing in junior western pleasure, western horsemanship, reining, western riding and trail that are shown with a Bosal or snaffle bit may be ridden with one or two hands on the reins. The tails of the reins must be crossed on the opposite side of the neck when riding with two hands on split reins except in reining. Closed reins (example mecate) may not be used with a snaffle bit, except in reining, where a mecate is permitted.

Timed Events

All Western tack and equipment is acceptable if humane. If a tie-down is used the noseband must be rope leather or nylon. No wire permitted. All bits described in the Western Performance Division are acceptable. Additional examples of acceptable bits are shown below. The list is not complete.



Roping bit



Sidepull



Chain gag bit



Short Shank - Gag w/ Small Twisted Wire Dogbone



Hackamore 3-piece twisted wire



Hackamore



Workman shorr shank bit

Driving Bits

1. Animals used in driving may be fitted with a half-cheek bit with the mouthpiece being either jointed, straight bar or twisted, a Butterfly Driving Bit or a Wilson snaffle with two extra floating rings to which the cheek pieces of the bridle are attached. When a Wilson snaffle is used, the reins should be buckled through both rings. The Wilson snaffle can have flat or wire cheeks.
2. Other traditional bits, such as the Liverpool, Buxton (only with draft horses), elbow, butterfly or post bit are acceptable. These bits must be used with a curb chain or strap. These bits may have a variety of mouthpieces, jointed, straight or ported
3. No type of bitless bridles may be used in a driving class.

Types of Driving Bits



Buxton Port Bit



Half Cheek Snaffle Bit



Half Cheek Single Twisted Wire



Half Cheek Mullen Mouth



Butterfly Snaffle Bit



Butterfly French Link



Liverpool Low Port



Liverpool Snaffle Bit



Military Elbow Driving Bit



Post Bit, Arch Mouth



Wilson Snaffle Bit