



MYLER BITS

CURB CHAINS ON MYLER SNAFFLES

Many Myler Bit designs allow a rider to utilise curb pressure with the use of a curb strap or curb chain. Curb pressure is traditionally used with shanked bits offering leverage, such as many Western bits and also Pelhams and Kimblewicks.

The unique design in Myler's snaffle cheeks with hooks, however, allows a rider to use leverage and curb pressure with a ring bit as well. (See advice sheet on Hooks)

Curb pressure is very effective for asking a horse to relax at the poll, and helping him to come into a good outline all along his body. Firstly, a curb strap helps to stabilise the bit in the horse's mouth. It also restricts the degree to which the rider can rotate the mouthpiece down and back onto the tongue, and thereby restricts the discomfort and swallowing difficulties caused by tongue pressure. It distributes the pressure exerted by the rider's hands, so it is less concentrated onto the sensitive tongue. It also provides a another signalling area for the horse to respond to.

Traditional snaffle bits apply direct backward pressure into the tongue and bars, which many horses resist by pulling into, pushing their weight straight through their shoulders and onto the forehead. Curb straps exert forward and downward pressure, which encourages the horse to flex from the base of the neck, rather than merely the poll. A truer outline is generated, and as the horse raises his withers it is easier for him to get his hindlegs under him and move "uphill".

Another benefit of utilising different pressure areas is that it helps the rider to ride with a lighter, gentler hand. For this reason, the Mylers advocate the use of curb pressure with novice riders and children. It allows the rider to learn the 'feel' of riding lightly, allows the horse to have distributed pressure for softer signals, and also helps the beginning rider maintain control without a high degree of rein pressure.

A curb chain used with a Myler snaffle will sit significantly higher on the back of the horse's jaw than a curb used with a traditional Pelham or Weymouth. This does not cause the curb pressure to be any less effective or more harsh in any way. It is simply used as a stabilisation point and pressure area for the horse to

respond to. In addition, the pressure higher up on the jaw is spread over a larger area than when used on the chin groove.

It is important that a curb chain or strap is attached correctly. Whilst the 2-finger space rule is a good guideline, it is all relative to the size of one's fingers! A better guideline is that one should only be able to move the reins back 1" to 1 1/4" before the curb chain engages. This way the horse is able to respond to light rein pressure in the mouth before curb pressure engages, teaching him to be lighter and more responsive. Too tight a curb chain and the horse does not receive a rewarding release. Too loose a curb chain and the horse gets pressure too hard and too late from the curb chain – the rider's message is lost and the horse upset.

Have you had a bad experience with curb pressure before? Some riders have tried bits with curb pressure on their horses but then found the horse resisted more than with a traditional ring bit. If this has happened to you it is worthwhile for you to consider what the horse was resisting. Was it the curb pressure? Or was it the mouthpiece of the bit? For instance, if the horse resisted a traditional single joint snaffle bit and was then ridden in a Pelham with the same kind of mouthpiece and resisted even more, it is likely the horse objected to the mouthpiece rather than the curb pressure.

Reconsider Curb Pressure!

