



WDAA Equipment and Attire Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS

APPOINTMENTS/TACK/BITS	1
Bridle:	1
Illegal bridle equipment	1
Hackamore/Bosal:	1
Bitless Bridles:	2
Western Two-Rein Bridle	3
Reins:	4
Hand position on reins:	5
Saddle:	6
Snaffle Bits:	7
Curb Bits:	8
Curb straps/Curb Chains:	9
Other:	9
Prohibited Equipment:	10
ATTIRE	10
Required apparel:	10
Optional apparel:	10
WARM UP RING/TRAINING AREAS	11
BIT EXAMPLES FOR WESTERN DRESSAGE – LEGAL AND NOT LEGAL	12
Snaffle bits	12
Curb bits	17
EQUIPMENT CHECK PROCESS FOR WESTERN DRESSAGE	26
General Information:	26



WDAA Equipment and Attire Guide

The purpose of this WDAA Equipment and Attire Guide is to provide an explanation for and additional information about the appointments (attire and tack) allowed under the USEF Western Dressage Division. In the case of conflicting verbiage, the current online USEF Rule Book will supersede this document.

A USEF-licensed competition that offers Western Dressage tests/classes must use either a USEF-licensed Category 2 Steward or an inspector designated by show management and under the direction of the C2 Steward. Tack and bits on both sides of the horse of a minimum of one-third of the horses in each class/test must be inspected.

At Federation-licensed competitions, except USEF Competition Lite competitions, the C2 Steward or the person who is under the direction of the Steward and appointed by the competition management will be responsible for overseeing the checking of the horse, tack, and attire. A horse must be eliminated from the test just completed if the horse or any tack and/or attire are in violation of the rules and/or the tongue has been tied. C2 Stewards or Equipment Inspectors are only required to inspect bits and other appointments on a minimum of one-third of the horses in a class. See further information in this document for proper equipment check procedures. Horses with illegal equipment in the warm-up ring will be eliminated from the next class they are entering unless the equipment can be corrected before the scheduled ride time for that entry.

At a non-USEF WDAA competition or a USEF Competition Lite, a designated individual must assume the responsibility of overseeing the checking of horses, tack, bits, and attire.

APPOINTMENTS/TACK/BITS

Bridle:

- Any western-type headstall must be used.
- A western cavesson (braided or plain) or pencil bosal with or without a get-down rope with space for two fingers placed between the cavesson and the jowl of the horse is allowed. The inside of the noseband must be smooth and free of any metal, other than the buckle.

Illegal bridle equipment

- Flash, figure-eight or dropped nose bands.
- Mechanical hackamores

Hackamore/Bosal:

- A hackamore (bosal) is permitted on a horse of any age, and at any level. A hackamore includes a bosal, rounded in shape, and constructed of braided rawhide or leather, and must have a flexible non-metallic core attached to a suitable headstall. No other material of any kind is to be used in conjunction with the bosal, i.e. steel, metal, or chains. Bosals may be wrapped with smooth electrical tape to prevent rubbing.



Rope cavesson - NOT LEGAL - Should be smooth. Harsh material is not legal. The knot is not legal.



LEGAL plain or rolled cavesson – smooth on the inside



Pencil bosal - LEGAL



The bosal above illustrates the illegal use of latex, sheepskin, or bandage material.

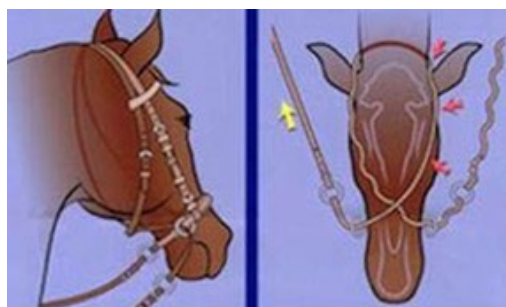


The hackamore pictured above illustrates the legal use of electric tape added to the bosal.

Bitless Bridles:

- A bitless bridle is permitted on a horse of any age at any level.
- All bitless bridles must be of Western style made of flat leather or leather-like materials.
- Cross-under bitless bridle - a simple and subtle two-loop system, one over the poll and one over the nose that embraces the whole of the head.
- No other variations are permissible.
- Bitless bridles with sidepulls are prohibited.

The photo and diagrams to the right illustrate a cross-under bitless bridle



Western Two-Rein Bridle

The Western two-rein bridles like those shown below are permitted.



A two-rein bridle is a bridle and bit, snaffle, or curb ridden over a full or pencil bosal or bosalita. The following are acceptable ways to hold the reins when using a two-rein bridle:

1. The Two-Rein Bridle with Snaffle Bit: The two-rein bridle with SNAFFLE consists of a snaffle bit and a pencil or full bosal or bosalita. When using a snaffle, the rider must ride with two hands whether using a loop rein or split reins. The rider will hold a bosal rein (mecate) and a snaffle rein in each hand as pictured below.



2. The Two-Rein with Curb Bit: The rider has the following choices:

a. Split Reins: When using a CURB BIT with SPLIT REINS and a pencil bosal or bosalita, the rider can ride with all reins in one hand but can only have one finger between the reins OR the rider can ride with a bit rein and a bosal rein in the left hand and a bit rein and bosal rein in the right hand.



b. Romal Reins: When using a curb bit with ROMAL REINS and a pencil bosal or bosalita, the rider has two options:

1. A romal must be held with one hand with the romal coming up from the bottom and out of the top of the hand. The bosal rein can then be held in the opposite hand.
2. A romal and bosal may be ridden in one hand, the reins coming up from the bottom of the hand and out of the top. No fingers can be between the reins.



Note: When using a curb bit as part of the Western two rein bridle, only a pencil bosal or bosalita can be used, not a full bosal.

The end of the mecate, called the tail, can be wrapped around the saddle horn, held by the rider, or slipped under the rider's belt.

Reins:

When the rider uses a snaffle bit, the following western style reins may be used:

- loop/connected reins
- split reins
- buckled reins
- mecate reins
- romal reins without a popper

Two hands must be used with any of these combinations. Horsehair, rope reins and mecate reins are allowed for bosals and snaffles. The mecate tail can be tied to the saddle horn, held by the rider, or tucked under the rider's belt.

When the rider uses a curb, the following reins may be used:

- romal reins
- split reins
- loop/connected reins
- buckled reins

When using a curb with romal reins, only one hand is allowed; when using other rein choices, one or two hands are allowed.

Mecate reins with snaffle bit



Hand position on reins:

In the case of romal reins, the romal is held in one hand with no fingers between the individual reins.

- The end of the romal may be held in the hand not used for reining to keep the romal from swinging and to adjust the position of the rein. The reins must be held so that there is at least 16" of rein between the hands.
- In the case of when split reins are held in one or two hands, the rider may not switch back and forth (from one handed to two handed) during a test. There are no restrictions on method of holding reins in two hands.

When split reins are held in one hand, there are two ways that the rider may use them.

- The rider may put one finger between the split reins; the ends of the reins fall on the side of the reining hand.
- The rider may hold both reins in one hand without a finger between the reins; the hand must be around the reins. The ends of the split reins may be held in the hand not used for reining to keep them from swinging and to adjust the position of the reins. No finger is allowed between the reins. The reins must be held so that there is at least 16" of rein between the hands.
- In the case of looped/connected reins, buckled reins, the reins are held in one or two hands; the rider must not switch back and forth during a test. (Exception: Freestyle).

At the end of the Free Walk or Free Jog, riders using split reins held in one hand may use the free or offhand to pull the reins back to the desired length. Riders using romal reins may use the hand using the romal to alter the tension or length of the reins from the bridle to the reining hand.

Saddle:

A standard American Western stock saddle with swells, a seat, cantle, skirt, fenders, and Western stirrups is required. A working Western side saddle is also acceptable.

a. Optional and permitted features may include:

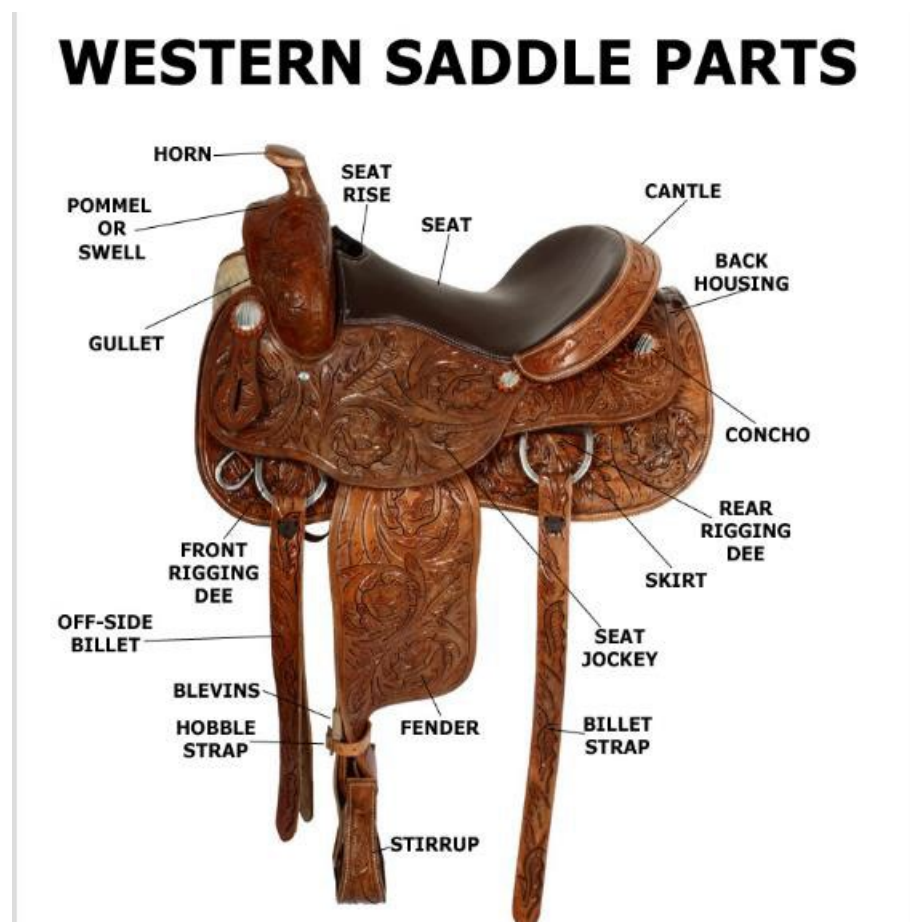
1. Horn
2. Padding or pads on the seat of saddle
3. Bucking rolls
4. Tapaderos, except in Western Dressage Equitation

b. The following features and style of saddles are not permitted:

1. Thigh & knee rolls
2. Saddles: Australian, Baroque, English, McClellan, and Spanish

c. Silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit.

d. A breastplate and/or crupper may be used.



Snaffle Bits:

- A snaffle bit may be used on a horse of any age being ridden at any level.
- A rider must use two hands with a snaffle bit.
- A snaffle bit offers no leverage or curb action and does not have shanks of any configuration.
- A standard snaffle is a conventional O-ring, egg butt, full cheek (keepers optional) or D-ring, all with rings having an outside diameter no smaller than 2 inches (50.8 mm), nor larger than 4 inches (101.6 mm). The inside of the circumference of the ring must be free of rein, curb or headstall attachments that would provide leverage.

Illustration shows how to measure an O-ring. This ring is too small.



- The bars of the snaffle mouthpiece must be round, oval, or egg-shaped, smooth, and unwrapped, except with latex, and no less than 5/16 inch (7.9 mm) and no more than 3/4 inch (19.05 mm) in diameter measured one inch (25 mm) from the cheek.



Bars measured 1" from cheek

- The bars may be inlaid, but the inlay must be smooth.
- The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces.
- If a mouthpiece is three pieces, a connecting ring must be no larger than 1 1/4 inches (31.75 mm) in diameter, or a connecting flat bar must be no longer than 2 inches (50.8 mm) and 3/8 inch (9.5 mm) to 3/4 inch (19.05 mm), measured top-to-bottom, and must lie flat in the horse's mouth.
- A mullen mouth (solid mouthpiece), barrel mouthpiece, Naptha bits (plastic or rubber) may be used.
- No flat, sharp, slow twist, twisted, or pointed edges on mouthpiece may be used.
- Note: If the bars of the mouthpiece are wrapped with latex, the minimum and maximum diameter requirements must still be met.
- If a bit hobble (may be a curb strap or chain) is used on a snaffle it must be attached below the reins. A curb strap used as a bit hobble may be braided or narrow.

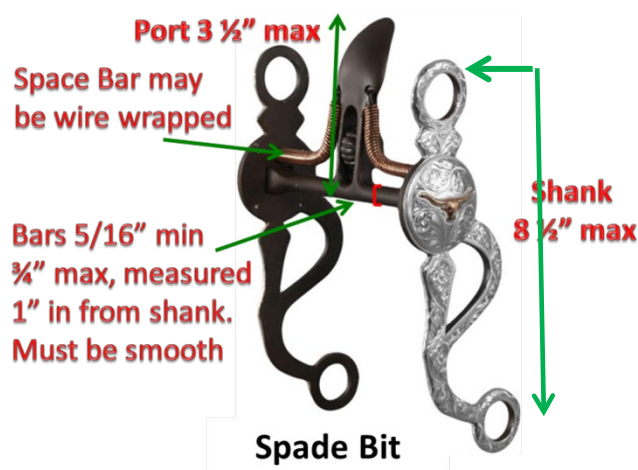


At left is snaffle bit with bit hobble correctly placed below reins.

- No flat, sharp, slow twist, twisted, or pointed edges on mouthpieces are allowed.

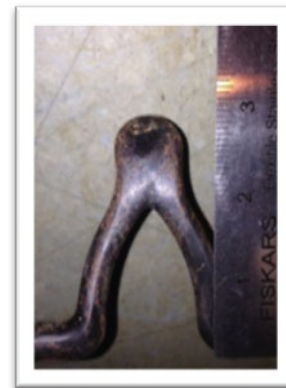
Curb Bits:

There is no discrimination against any standard western bit. A standard western curb bit may be used on a horse of any age being ridden at any level.



8 ½" (215.9 mm) maximum shank length.

To measure the bit length, use a vertical line from the upper most part of the headstall slot to the point of pull for the rein.



The port must be no higher than 3 ½ inches

- A standard Western bit is defined as having a shank with a maximum length overall of 8 1/2" (215.9 mm). The mouthpiece will consist of a metal bar 5/16" (7.9 mm) to 3/4" (19.05 mm) in diameter as measured one inch in from the shank.
- The bars may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped; the bars may be encased in smooth 5/16" (7.9 mm) to 3/4" (19.05 mm) in diameter tubular barrels that rotate around the bars.
- Nothing may protrude above or below the mouthpiece (bar) such as extensions, prongs or rivets designed to intimidate the horse. Rollers attached to the center of the bit are acceptable and may extend below the bar.

- 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 ¼ inch (31.75 mm) or less in diameter or a connecting flat bar of 3/8 to ¾ inch (9.5mm – 19.05 mm) measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2" (50 mm), which lies flat in the mouth, or a roller or port as described herein.
- The port must be no higher than 3 ½ inches (88.9 mm) maximum with roller(s) and covers acceptable. Jointed mouthpieces, half-breeds and spade bits are standard. Wire on the braces (above the bars and attaching to the spade) of a traditional spade bit is acceptable.
 - Reins must be attached to each shank.
 - A flat curb chain or leather chin strap must be used with a curb bit. Curb chains or flat leather chin straps must be at least 1/2 inch (12.7 mm) in width and lie flat against the jaw of the horse. No wire, rawhide, metal, or other substance can be used in conjunction with or as part of the flat leather chin strap or curb chain. Round, rolled, braided or rawhide curb straps are prohibited.
 - A slobber guard (may be bar, chain, strap, or string) on a curb bit is permitted.
 - Rein chains with a spade bit are allowed.

All curb bits must be free of mechanical devices. Nothing, such as extensions, rivets, or prongs, may protrude below the mouthpiece (bars). The following, but not limited to these, are prohibited:

- Slip or gag bits, half cheeks, bits with hooks and slots, donut, or flat polo mouthpieces and kimberwicks.
- Roping bits with reins attached to a single ring at the center of a cross bar.
- Any rein design or other devices that increase the effective length and thereby the leverage of the shank of a standard western bit.
- Round, rolled, braided, or rawhide curb straps are prohibited.

Curb straps/Curb Chains:

Curb chains and flat leather chin straps must be at least ½" (12.7 mm) in width and lie flat against the jaw of the horse. No wire, rawhide, metal, or other substance can be used in conjunction with or as part of the flat leather chin strap or curb chain. Round, rolled, braided or rawhide curb straps are prohibited.



Other:

- Protective "polo" style leg wraps **are permitted**, with color either white or matching natural color of the horse as much as possible. (**See WD121**)
- Fly hoods (ear covers) should be discreet in color and design and should not cover the horse's eyes. After completion of the test, the exhibitor or his representative is responsible for removing the fly hood to present to the designated equipment steward for inspection to ensure that nothing prohibited has been added.
- Whips: One whip, no longer than 47.2 inches (120 cm) including lash, is permitted in all classes/tests.

Prohibited Equipment:

- Anything that alters the intended use of equipment as provided for in the description of appointments for a given class/test.
- Use of martingales, bit guards, any kind of gadgets (such as bearing, side, running, balancing reins, nasal strips, tongue tied down, etc.), any kind of boots (including splint boots, bell boots, Easyboots, hock boots, etc.), or tail bandages, any form of blinkers, and nose covers are cause for elimination.
- Rein additions or attachments that create additional leverage by any means are not allowed.
- Any decoration of the horse with extravagant items, such as ribbons or flowers, etc. in the mane, tail, etc. Exception: costumed freestyle.
- Costumed Freestyle: Any accessories that may frighten other horses and/or threaten the safety of riders in the warm-up area may be prohibited in the warm-up area, at the discretion of competition management.
- Garrocha poles are prohibited in all classes.

ATTIRE

Required apparel:

- Suitable western hat. Protective headgear may be worn without penalty (See GR801).
- Long-sleeved shirt of any color; short sleeves may be worn at the discretion of the judge.
- Trousers, pants, a one-piece long-sleeved equitation suit, provided it includes a collar.
- Boots. Tall English boots, clearly visible on the outside of pants, are not permitted.

Optional apparel:

- Necktie, kerchief, bolo tie, or pin.
- Vest, jacket, coat, and/or sweater.
- Spurs: Western style, with or without blunt tines, English dressage style, roller ball, and blunt bumper spurs are permitted. Rowels must be vertical. Spurs with sharp tines are not permitted.



LEGAL bumper spur

- Chaps, shotgun chaps, chinks, or split riding skirt
 - Western half-chaps: Half chaps must have some kind of Western style decorations, such as contrasting color scroll, conchos, beading, and/or fringe. Plain English half-chaps are prohibited.
- Protective headgear is acceptable; not required to be of western style.







WARM UP RING/TRAINING AREAS






Note: Schooling and warm-up areas must be monitored by the designated stewards starting at least 30 minutes before the first scheduled ride.







- The restrictions regarding Illegal Equipment (*see WD122*) apply to warm-up and other training areas; however, training martingales (only with snaffle rein or plain snaffle bridle), boots, bandages (without magnets), and earmuffs are permitted.
- A training martingale consists of a divided strap attached to the girth that does not provide downward pull; the extension of each strap must be connected from the point of division only to the rein on the same side and must be free to slide. The rings through which the reins slide must be connected to a neck strap.
- Fly hoods (ear covers) that do not cover the horse's eyes are permitted in warm-up and other training areas.
- Single direct side reins or double sliding reins (triangle reins) are permitted only when longeing (mounted or unmounted). A single direct side rein is defined as an auxiliary rein affixed to the bit and to the girth, saddle, or surcingle on the side of the horse (not between the legs).
- Only one longe line is permitted while longeing. A longe line must attach only to the halter, cavesson or snaffle bit of a bridle and go directly to the hand of the longeur.
- The following whips are permitted for schooling:
 - One whip no longer than 47.2 inches (120 cm), including lash, may be carried by the rider when mounted.
 - One longeing whip is permitted only when longeing. There is no restriction on the length of whip permitted for working a horse in hand.






BIT EXAMPLES FOR WESTERN DRESSAGE – LEGAL AND NOT LEGAL



Snaffle bits

Bit	Determination	Reason
 <p><i>Inlaid two-piece mouthpiece</i></p>	LEGAL	
 <p><i>D-Ring</i></p>	LEGAL if size meets rule requirement.	<i>Smooth rollers same circumference of the bar and that don't affect the bend of the mouthpiece</i>
 <p><i>O-ring; 3 piece mouthpiece with barrel</i></p>	LEGAL	
 <p><i>O-ring bit; barrel mouthpiece</i></p>	LEGAL	
 <p><i>Flat 3-piece mouthpiece</i></p>	LEGAL	<i>Legal if connecting bar meets measurement requirements</i>
 <p><i>Mullen mouth</i></p>	LEGAL	


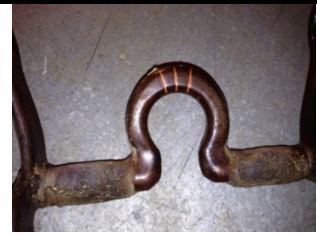



 <p><i>Snaffle with curb strap</i></p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Legal if reins are attached above bit hobble/curb strap</i></p>
 <p><i>Center hinged joint in snaffle</i></p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Center hinged joint is (must be) smooth</i></p>
 <p><i>Center connecting ring</i></p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Connecting ring and bars meet (must meet) measurement requirements</i></p>
 <p><i>Snaffle with a port</i></p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	
 <p><i>Full cheek snaffle</i></p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	







Bit	Determination	Reason
 <p><i>A Baucher bit</i></p>	NOT LEGAL	Not of O-ring, egg butt, or D-ring configuration
 <p><i>Bicycle chain</i></p>	NOT LEGAL	
 <p><i>Twisted wire</i></p>	NOT LEGAL	
 <p><i>Wire-wrapped</i></p>	NOT LEGAL	
 <p><i>Twisted mouthpiece</i></p>	NOT LEGAL	
 <p><i>Twisted bit</i></p>	NOT LEGAL	


 <p><i>Mouthpiece edges sharp, flat</i></p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Flat mouthpiece with sharp edges, not rounded</i></p>
 <p><i>Ridgid donut shape</i></p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	
 <p><i>Type of kimberwick</i></p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Slots on the rings</i></p>
 <p><i>Type of kimberwick</i></p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Slots on the rings</i></p>
 <p><i>Slots on rings</i></p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Slots on the rings and mouthpiece wrapped in wire; port (connecting piece higher than allowed</i></p>

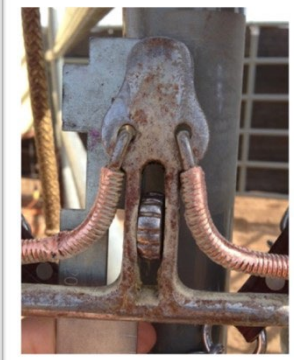




	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Twisted wire not permitted</i></p>
 <p><i>Half-cheek</i></p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p><i>Not permitted</i></p>






Curb bits






Bit	Determination	Reason
 <p><i>Hinged mouthpiece</i></p>	LEGAL	<i>Allowed as long as it does not have a pinch point or sharp edges</i>
 <p><i>Inlaid, latex wrapped</i></p>	LEGAL	<i>Legal as long as mouthpiece is not greater than ¾ inch in diameter</i>
 <p><i>Traditional spade bit</i></p>	LEGAL	<i>Example of wire on braces of a traditional spade bit</i>
 <p><i>Rein chains</i></p>	LEGAL	<i>Example of spade bit</i>
 <p><i>Half-breed bit</i></p>	LEGAL	

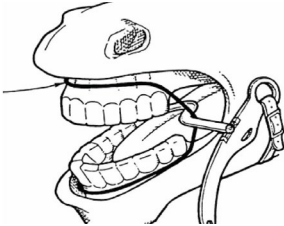
 <p>Legal bit design</p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	
 <p>Lip strap Slobber Guard-bar shown</p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p>Lip strap and bar, chain, strap, or string slobber guard (all legal)</p>
 <p>Roller on bar</p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p>The roller forms a continuous line</p>
 <p>Rivets on joint piece</p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p>Legal because rivets or knobs are very short, smooth, and rounded to join the mouthpiece together. Extend very little below the bar.</p>
 <p>Rollers on bar</p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p>Rollers attached to the center of the bit are allowed and may extend below the bar.</p>
 <p>Jointed mouthpiece</p>	<p>LEGAL</p>	<p>Jointed mouthpieces are allowed with a curb bit and may consist of 2 or 3 pieces</p>







 <p><i>Broken mouthpiece</i></p>	<p><i>LEGAL</i></p>	<p><i>Allowed on curb bit. Bars may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex-wrapped.</i></p>
--	----------------------------	---

Bit	Determination	Reason
 <p>Spade bit</p>	NOT LEGAL	Port is higher than 3.5 inches (wire on braces is legal)
 <p>Curb bit with connecting pieces</p>	NOT LEGAL	Three connecting pieces with joints allow the mouthpiece to bend. Only one connecting piece is allowed.
 <p>Rigid donut</p>	NOT LEGAL	
 <p>Gag bit</p>	NOT LEGAL	
 <p>Jr. cow horse bit</p>	NOT LEGAL	Sliding mouthpiece on rings allows extra leverage

 <p>Curb bit</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Twisted bars</p>
 <p>Mustache bit</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Bars curve down to a slight point</p>
 <p>Curb bit</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Prongs extend below bars</p>
 <p>Flat polo type bit</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Mouthpiece must be rounded</p>
 <p>Roping bit</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Reins must attach to each shank</p>

 <p>Mikmar Combination bit</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Bars are flat and added nose string is not permitted</p>
	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Bars are twisted, not rounded</p>
	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Bars are flat, not rounded</p>
 <p>Curb bit with rollers on bars</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Separate rollers do not create a continuous line</p>
 <p>Rein extensions</p>	<p>NOT LEGAL</p>	<p>Rein extensions that are tight enough to lock onto the bit to lock movement are not legal</p>

	NOT LEGAL	<i>Example of a mechanical device that alters the use of equipment</i>
---	------------------	--

Curb straps/Curb chains	Determination	Reason
	LEGAL	<i>Threading of lip strap between layers of curb strap</i>
	LEGAL	<i>Legal if measures at least ½ inch in width</i>
	LEGAL	<i>Legal if measures at least ½ inch in width</i>
	LEGAL	<i>Legal if measures at least ½ inch in width</i>
	LEGAL	<i>Legal ONLY used with snaffle as a bit hobble; NOT LEGAL with a curb bit.</i>
	LEGAL	<i>Legal ONLY used with snaffle as a bit hobble; NOT LEGAL with a curb bit.</i>

Curb straps/Curb chains	Determination	Reason
	NOT LEGAL	<i>"Bumps" on the inside; does not lie flat against the horse</i>
	NOT LEGAL	<i>Round bar welded to inside of chain is not allowed</i>
	NOT LEGAL	<i>Tacks on the inside</i>
	NOT LEGAL	<i>Not legal if a metal bar is sewn between layers of leather</i>
	NOT LEGAL	<i>This curb chain is less than ½ inch in width</i>
	NOT LEGAL	<i>Braided curb strap is not smooth and not legal with curb bit</i>

EQUIPMENT CHECK PROCESS FOR WESTERN DRESSAGE

Once the exhibitor leaves the arena, the exhibitor must remain mounted until they reach the C2 Steward or equipment inspector. At that time, the exhibitor will dismount for the equipment inspection. Competitors will be asked to drop the bridle of the horse, removing the bit to below the mouth of the horse. A metal detector and/ or magnet may be used to detect the presence of metal in nosebands. Random pulling of leg wraps will also occur at this time. See also WD119.

General Information:

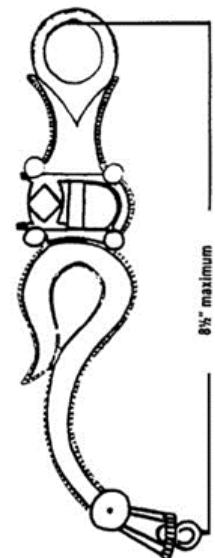
- Tack and bits on both sides of the horse of a minimum of one third (1/3) of the horses in each class/test must be inspected immediately as the horse leaves the arena.
- New disposable gloves must be available for and used by bit inspectors if a mouthpiece must be handled by the inspector.
- Use the proper tools and maintain cleanliness of the tools between horses. Hand sanitizer is very easy to carry, and the exhibitors really do appreciate seeing it used every time before a bit check if a mouthpiece has previously been touched. Same with cleaning the measuring device. Hand sanitizer and/or a small spray bottle of rubbing alcohol works great.
- Exhibitors must drop the bridle of the horse, removing the bit to below the horse's mouth. **RIDER MUST DISMOUNT PRIOR TO DROPPING BRIDLE.**
- Checking of the bridle must be done with the greatest caution, as some horses are very touchy and sensitive about their mouths.
- Random pulling of protective "polo" style leg wraps will also occur at this time.
- Any evidence of blood on the horse's mouth or sides or the addition of substances or devices behind protective "polo" leg wraps will result in elimination of the entry for that class/test.

Following is an efficient process to conduct an equipment check:

1. Discuss with the judge the manner of notification if evidence of abuse or illegal equipment is found.
2. Find a safe area that is fairly close to the exit gate, but out of the way of the next entry into the ring to conduct the checks. Keep the check area consistent so the exhibitors always know where to go upon exiting their test.
3. There is no rush, so be sure to tell the exhibitor to take their time. Sometimes the exhibitor is in a hurry to get to their next ride, and they may have an assistant drop the bridle for you. Some riders need a step stool to dismount and/or re-mount. Give them a chance to get one.
4. All riders **MUST** dismount before dropping the bridle. This is **NOT** optional.
5. The rider (usually) dismounts on the near (left) side of the horse, and the steward should be positioned out of the way on the off (right) side of the horse. Ask the rider to please drop the bridle.
6. At this time, the steward is looking at the bridle and outside of the bit. The curb strap/chain is in plain view. The steward can see the horse's mouth, outside corners of the lips, reins and rein attachments, snaffle bit hobble (if used), curb strap/chain and nose band/cavesson/pencil bosal. You are also looking at the rings of the snaffle and the shanks of the curb for size/length at this time.
7. If a noseband is used, it must be a pencil bosal type or smooth leather. Check the tightness of the noseband before the bridle is dropped. If you can plainly see that it is not tight, you do not need to touch it at all. If it looks to be tightly adjusted, gently feel to see that you can get 2 fingers (placed side by side) between the side jaws of the horse and the noseband strap. If it is adjusted too tightly, advise the exhibitor that it should not be tight. Often this can easily be found and corrected in a casual pre-check in the warm-up area.
8. Many riders will undo the curb strap/chain before dropping the bridle. The steward should have taken note before it is undone to make sure that the chain is not twisted and lays flat. The curb strap/chain should not make contact with the jaw when the reins are loose and two fingers are placed side-by

side between the curb strap/chain and the jaw. If there is a problem with the curb chain or strap, ask the handler to leave the bridle on the horse, and take a picture of it with your phone. Also explain the problem to the exhibitor at this time. Then proceed with the bridle drop.

9. It is a good idea to ask the rider to leave a rein over the horse's neck while the bridle is dropped.
10. As the bridle is being lowered so that the bit is below the horse's mouth, the steward should hold his/her right hand a few inches below the mouthpiece so that if something drops out it will be caught in the hand.
11. It is also a good idea to hold your left hand between the horse's head and your head. This is to protect you if the horse tosses his head as the bridle is dropped.
12. It is recommended that you DO NOT touch the bit or bridle until it is removed from the horse.
13. NEVER attempt to assist the handler with the bridle removal unless they ask for your assistance, or if there is a safety issue involved.
14. Once the bridle is dropped so that the bit is below the horse's mouth, look at the mouthpiece. If you suspect that the bars might be too thin, you should measure them at this time. If the mouthpiece is of illegal formation, you must take a picture of it with your phone and explain the problem to the exhibitor. The judge should be notified at this time. The same process is taken if there is blood on the mouthpiece. The judge should confirm the findings if there is a problem.
15. Only the judge can disqualify an entry for illegal equipment or blood. The steward cannot disqualify, but can only notify the judge and management, and note in the report.
16. Only touch the mouthpiece of the bit if absolutely necessary. Often it is prudent to hold a shank as you inspect the mouthpiece to keep it still. If you must touch the mouthpiece, you should use a clean exam glove. Always keep disinfectant gel/spray on hand to disinfect your hands and measurement tools between each horse to prevent cross contamination.
17. Check the curb chain to make sure that is at least ½" wide and does not have any prongs or rough areas on the inside. If a curb strap is used, make sure that it is flexible and does not have anything other than smooth leather on the inside. If it is not flexible, check it with a metal detector to determine the presence of a metal bar between the leather layers. You will not be able to tell by looking.
18. Also check the noseband to make sure that it is flexible and that there are no metal studs on the inside. There should only be smooth leather on the inside of the noseband.
19. When the bars of a bit are wrapped in latex, they can sometimes exceed the maximum ¾" thickness allowed measured 1" in from the side of the bit. Notify the exhibitor of this if a bit is close to exceeding, or only slightly exceeds the allowed measurements due to the wrap.
20. If the length of the bit shank is questionable, it should be measured using a vertical line from the upper most part of the headstall slot to the point of rein pull. – see illustration.
21. To check a bosal, ask the handler to remove it from the horse's head. Look for rubs on the jaws and on the front of the face. Check the flexibility of the bosal, and if there is a lack of flexibility use a metal detector to check for metal in the core of the bosal. It is OK if the metal detector alerts on the end ball of the bosal, since this area does not affect the integrity of the bosal in any way. Often there is a metal ring in the ball that is used in the making of the bosal.
22. Smooth electrical tape on the sides and nose part of the bosal are ok. Anything other than smooth electrical tape is disallowed. If the tape is twisted or applied in any way other than a smooth wrap, it is disallowed, and the judge should be notified. Electrical tape should also be felt to ensure there are no foreign substances underneath.



23. Tell the handlers "Thank you" after you are through checking the bridle and tell them they may now put the bridle back on if they desire. Sometimes the horse is haltered at this time. When you are sure they have control of the horse, go ahead and do the walk-around.
24. Walk around the front or the back to check the equipment on both sides, and to check for cuts on the legs or sides of the horse.
25. If you find a spur cut or evidence of abuse, take a picture of it with your phone and notify the judge. The judge will come out and view the horse if abuse is found.
26. If the horse has nicked his coronary band or cannon, just tell the handler so they can treat it. If you see any rubs in the girth area, corners of the mouth from the bit, let the handler know so they can take action to protect the area.
27. Thank the exhibitor to let them know that your check is complete.
28. This entire process is very quick, and the exhibitors usually appreciate an efficient and smooth equipment check.
29. This process has worked very well for many stewards and is very fast and thorough. Always remember that you are the steward of the horse, and the popularity or notoriety of the rider is of no concern. All horses are equal in a check and deserve the same respectful exam.