

AQHA BIT & REIN RULES:
443. WESTERN EQUIPMENT

(a) References to hackamore mean the use of a flexible, braided rawhide, leather or rope bosal, the core of which may be either rawhide or flexible cable. A hackamore 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 are prohibited. This rule does not refer to a so called mechanical hackamore.

(b) 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" (100 mm). 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" (8 mm) in diameter, measured one inch (25 mm) 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" (32 mm) or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" (10 mm to 20 mm) measured top to bottom, with a maximum length of 2" (50 mm), which lies flat in the horse's mouth, is acceptable. Optional curb strap attached below the reins on a snaffle bit is acceptable.

(c) 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:

(1) 8 1/2" (215 mm) maximum length shank to be measured as indicated in the diagram on page 137. Shanks may be fixed or loose.

(2) Concerning mouthpieces, bars must be round, oval or egg shaped, smooth and unwrapped metal of 5/16" to 3/4" (8 mm to 20 mm) in diameter, measured 1" (25 mm) from the cheek. 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" (32 mm) or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" (10mm to 20 mm) measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2" (50 mm), which lies flat in the horse's mouth, is acceptable.

(3) The port must be no higher than 3 1/2" (90 mm) maximum, with rollers and covers acceptable. Broken mouthpieces, half breeds and spades are standard.

(4) Slip or gag bits, and donut and flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable.

(d) Except for hackamore/snaffle bit classes or junior horses shown with hackamore/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.

(e) 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 (40 cm) 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 listed under Rule 451. 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. In all other classes, including the reined portion of working cow horse, the free hand may be used to adjust the rider's length of rein.

(f) 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, working cow horse, western riding and trail that are shown with a hackamore or snaffle bit may be ridden with one (refer to 443(d)) 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 working cow horse and reining. Closed reins (example mecate) may not be used with a snaffle bit, except in working cow horse and reining, where a mecate is permitted.

(h) In all western classes, horses will be shown in a western saddle and appropriate bridle, snaffle bit or hackamore 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, hackamore, 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.