

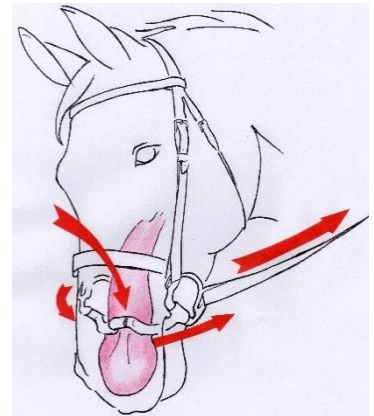
CURB CHAINS ON MYLER SNAFFLES

Some Myler Snaffles are designed to allow a rider to utilise curb pressure with a curb strap or curb chain. Curb pressure is traditionally used with shanked bits, which offer leverage, such as many Western bits and also Pelhams and Kimblewicks, but you can also use it on your Myler Snaffle to great effect.

Leverage has acquired a bad reputation in British biting, but all it means is “the exertion of force by means of a lever”. Like moving a rock with a stick, the longer the lever, the less force is required to move the object. - Leverage allows more movement with less force.

More leverage in the bit allows the rider to communicate with the horse with a lighter hand. If the rider doesn't adjust his aids as the horse responds it is not the fault of the bit!

When the rider applies rein pressure, he is pulling the bit back towards his hands. This pulls the horse's tongue back into the bottom jaw. However, the rider's hands are above the level of the mouth, and so, depending on how “fixed” the mouthpiece and reins are on the bit cheek, there is also a degree of downward roll or rotation of the mouthpiece.



The more fixed the mouthpiece and reins on the cheek, the more leverage is available to the rider.

Traditional snaffle bits mainly apply direct backward pressure into the tongue and bars, which many horses resist by pushing their heads down and out. This pushes 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 from behind the ears. This generates a better outline because stretching his neck forwards and down helps the horse raise his withers, so it is easier for him to get his hindlegs under him and move “uphill”.



This horse's face may be on the vertical, but purely because of hyperflexion at the top of the neck. Look at the tension in the neck and along the whole body as well as the stress in his eye. The horse cannot move forward freely.

Flexion from the base vs the top of the neck can be a subtle difference to the eye and is affected by the horse's confirmation, but it makes a significant difference to his way of going, not to mention his comfort.



Here, the horse is “rolling over” from the base of the neck. He has a rounded, “uphill” outline, so he is lighter in front and better able to get his hindquarters underneath him. He is moving well and also looks much more comfortable and relaxed.

You can get a bit of an impression of this yourself: try walking around with your chin bent down but with your neck coming vertically straight out of your shoulders. If you relax and try to bend your neck from the bottom you will find it much easier to move!

A curb also:

- helps to stabilise the bit in the horse's mouth
- 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
- divides and shares out the pressure exerted by the rider's hands, so it is less concentrated onto the sensitive tongue
- provides another signalling area for the horse to respond to, - helping to break habits of resistance

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.



Original Cheek with Hole, shown with Quick Link Carabiner attached

Myler Eggbutt Snaffles with Hooks have small holes or loops to allow a curb strap or chain to be attached.

Quick Links (see left) can be used with the holes to attach a curb chain. Small hooks are available to fasten a curb strap to the loops (see right & below).



New style Cheek with Loop, which makes it easy to use a curb strap and hooks

A curb chain or strap 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.



*Original style Eggbutt with Hooks.
Curb Chain attached with Quick Links through the hole.*



*New style Eggbutt with Hooks.
Curb Strap attached with small hooks to the loop.*

It is very important that the curb chain or strap is fitted correctly. Whilst the 2-finger-room 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 late and too hard from the curb chain - the rider's message is lost and the horse upset.

You can check the curb pressure from the ground by inserting your fingers under the chain or strap and moving the reins back a couple of inches. You may be surprised by how subtle the signal is. You will probably be even more surprised when you ride your horse and see what a huge difference the curb chain makes!

If you have had a bad experience with curb pressure before it is worthwhile considering 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 and make the most of Myler's incredibly versatile Eggbutt with Hooks!

