

## MYLER COMBINATION BITS

A wonderful training tool for horses ranging from youngsters to well-schooled campaigners.



**NB: please do not be put off by the amount of information in this document. It may look scary at first glance, but the Myler Combination is really not a difficult or complicated tool to use and briefer fitting guidance can be found in the swing ticket sold with the bit. There is also a shorter description of the Myler Combination at the end of the UK Leaflet.**

**The information below is very comprehensive for those who like to know every single detail!**

### Design

Unique in design, and one of the kindest bits available, the Myler's Combination Bit is a hybrid of a ring bit and a shank bit, with some hackamore influences, although it is important to note that the Myler Combination Bit is **not** a hackamore **nor** a hackamore combination. The fit of both the noseband and jaw strap is higher, with the noseband set above the nostrils (like a Cavesson), so it cannot restrict the horse's airway. The noseband and jaw strap are fitted snugly, but not tight, against the horse's face, so the action of the bit is smooth and efficient.

The lightweight mouthpiece on the Myler Combination Bit slides freely on the centre ring until the degree of shank rotation brings it up against the little protrusion, or stop, on the ring. The noseband and jaw strap are part of a single-piece of cord which runs through two small offset rings on the purchase.

## Action

Myler Combination Bits divide and share the rein pressure exerted by the rider over several different areas. Initially, the bit acts on the nose; poll and back of the jaw, with the mouthpiece "floating" on a loose ring. The total pressure applied by the rider is shared evenly over these 3 areas.

If the rider increases the pull on the reins, the mouthpiece moves up against the little 'stop' on the cheek ring and engages, acting on the tongue and bars like a "normal" mouthpiece. At this point, the pressure exerted by the rider is spread over 5 areas – nose; poll; jaw; tongue; and bars, each receiving only 1/5 of the pressure the rider puts into the rein

*As with all bits, the rider must respond to the horse by relaxing the contact when the horse does as he was asked, or the horse has no incentive to be responsive.*

With most "normal" bits which act primarily on the tongue, the horse is able to evade this pressure by resisting and changing the angle of pull (see the Information Sheet on Resistance: What is Happening and Why)

With a Myler Combination, however, the pressure on the nose, jaw and poll will **increase** if the horse moves up or down away from the vertical. The horse is therefore rewarded for keeping his head where the rider wants it, which helps him stay light and relaxed at the poll.

***This reward; the lack of tongue pressure; and the pressure exerted on the horse's nose, jaw and poll are all extremely effective at getting the horse to relax at the poll; "roll over" from the withers; & move in an uphill, rounded outline.***



## Mouthpieces

All Myler Combination Bit mouthpieces are made from Sweet Iron which will corrode gradually over time giving a sweet taste that will encourage salivation, (See the Information Sheet: Sweet Iron Bits).

The Myler Combination Bit is available in several different mouthpieces, normally with 2 rein options on the shank.

Available in the following mouthpieces

MB02 4½" only                      MB04: 4½"; 5"; 5½"; 6"

MB36 5"; 5½"                      MB33 5"; 5½"

MB06, 5", & MB32-3 triple barrel, 5"; 5½" while stocks last

## Use

The Myler Combination Bit is particularly suitable as the first bit for a young horse or pony, which will be used to head pressure signals from being led in a head collar. It can also be a great bit for horses who are very nervous in the mouth; ex-racehorses who have been trained to “run into their mouths” and are reluctant to come into a schooled-horse outline; and older horses who think they know it all and will benefit from a very different feel in the communication they receive from the rider.

Many professional event riders find the Myler Combination invaluable to get the horse relaxed and going as softly as possible and working well off the other aids, before they replace it with a permitted bit for their dressage test.

## Preparing Your Myler Combination Bit

The original style of noseband on the Myler Combination is cord and rawhide, which can be shaped to the individual horse's face by soaking in warm water until it is pliable. It will then set in this customised shape as it dries. If the nose is very sensitive, the shaped nosepiece can be covered with a thin layer of vet wrap, or one of the Myler combination fleece sleeves, but it should not be covered with anything bulky as the signalling effect will be lost. The knots either side of the noseband are particularly important to the lateral aids.

Most Myler Combinations are now available with flat leather nosebands, these should not be covered for the same reason.

Myler Combination noseband kits of both types, and the fleece sleeves, are available to purchase separately.

## Attaching the Myler Combination Bit to Your Bridle

Remove your existing noseband from your bridle and attach your cheek pieces to the top of the purchase (the part of the cheek above the mouthpiece.) In the Myler Combination this is angled out slightly from the horse's face to avoid rubbing.

The purchase on a Myler Combination is much longer than that on an ordinary bit, so you may need to make extra holes in your headpiece, or get shorter cheekpieces.



## Flashes, Martingales, etc.

All of these gadgets have only one purpose: to compensate for an uncomfortable or poorly trained horse. They will interfere with the way a Myler Combination works and you will have wasted your money on what is an expensive piece of kit!

## Tacking Up

Before you bridle your horse, unhook the black jaw strap; or if you have the old style fitting, ensure that it is loosened as much as possible to allow the maximum room.

## **Checking the Fit**

For the correct width fitting please see the Information Sheet: *Sizing and Measuring a Bit.* The Myler Combination has a very high purchase, and you should check that it does not press against the sides of the horse's face.

Height wise, the bit should fit snugly into the corners of the lips, normally making one wrinkle, but do check how it lies inside the horse's mouth because all horses are not the same.

If you pull down lightly on the bit cheeks, there should not be a gap of more than  $\frac{1}{8}$ " between the mouthpiece and the corners of the lips, or the mouthpiece is probably too low. The mouthpiece should be lying on the bottom of the ring; - if it is being pushed up along the ring, this indicates that the bit is too low in the horse's mouth. If the cheek pieces bow out when you pull on the reins, this is also a sign that the mouthpiece is too low.

Position the noseband high on the horse's nose, so it doesn't interfere with the horse's breathing in any way. - It must lie on the nose bone above the nasal cartilage but must not be fitted so high that it rubs the projecting cheek bones. No additional noseband is needed.



It can be helpful to thread a thin cord around the noseband and tie it onto the headpiece so it cannot drop down. Some Combinations now come with these cords, which can be dispensed with once the correct tightness is achieved and maintained (see below).

## **Transitioning Your Horse into his Myler Combination Bit**

It is very important to take time to transition your horse into any new bit, but particularly vital if it is a Myler Combination Bit because it will feel so different to the horse.

Any new equipment or training approach should be introduced in a safe environment, like a school, until you are confident that you are both ready to work outside.

You first need to simulate the bit's action prior to mounting so the horse can anticipate how the bit will work. This exercise also allows you to anticipate his behaviour with the bit.

With the Myler Combination Bit, you have 2 things to show the horse, so transition him into the mouthpiece first, leaving the jaw strap on the loosest fitting, until he has 'given' once or twice as described below:



In the stable, or enclosed school, stand by his left shoulder and place the reins over his neck as if you were going to mount. Hold both reins just in front of the withers to mimic where the reins would be when mounted.



Next, gently apply even pressure to both reins, activating the bit and asking your horse to relax at the poll and the withers. When he gives to the pressure by “nodding” his head and neck and coming onto the vertical, release the pressure with your hand and praise him. Take your time. He may move his head; lean; and/or take a few steps backwards or forwards until he gets used to the idea, but you are aiming for him gently to lower his head onto the vertical, releasing the head pressure for himself and learning where the “Comfort Zone” is. Repeat a few times to check he understands and to reinforce the understanding.

Once you are happy he understands the new mouthpiece, you need to show him the effect of the nose, jaw and poll pressure by repeating what you have done with the mouthpiece. You must take plenty of time to do this, tightening the jaw strap very gradually, hole by hole, over a few minutes, so the horse has plenty of time to get used to the totally new action of the bit.



The final fit you are aiming for is to have the jaw strap snug enough so that only the tip of your little finger fits under the nosepiece. This will need to be checked several times during the first few rides and then each time you ride subsequently, because the cord will stretch the first few times it is used. You may need to make extra holes in the jaw strap to ensure it is the right fit.

Ensure that the noseband remains high on the nose throughout (if necessary use some light cord to support it from the headpiece, until it is tight enough to stay up on its own and has finished stretching).

The horse will instantly cause himself pressure on the face if he demonstrates any of the usual evasions (eg. head up, mouth open, etc.) and time and care must be taken to make sure he learns the new “rules” without frightening himself.

Be very careful not to pull on the reins when leading or mounting the horse and to move off with an extra-light hand when riding with the Myler Combination Bit for the first time.

## **Riding with the Myler Combination for the First Time**

Ensure your horse is in a safe environment before you mount and then walk away on a loose rein for a few minutes. Very slowly, take up a light contact and walk quietly while you both become accustomed to the feel of the new bit. When you feel the horse is ready to come into the bridle, just close your fingers on the reins and ask the horse to move forward with your seat and leg. When he gives to you, and comes into the bridle, immediately lighten the rein pressure by relaxing your fingers and then maintain only a very light contact to ensure he recognises the reward.

## **Anticipate Some Resistance.**

If your horse has been resistant in his old bit, there is a strong likelihood he will be resistant in his new bit. Simply put - he is going to try what he knows, and some evasions will have become learnt habit or muscle memory rather than direct reactions to his bit.

The Myler Combination is particularly good for helping to develop a horse's top line. If the muscles along the top of his neck are under-developed he will not be able to sustain a good outline for very long at a time, so bear this in mind with your training programme and help him build up to his new self-carriage gradually.

## **Be Ready to Adjust Your Riding**

The Myler Combination can affect very significant changes in your horse's way of going, so you must be ready to adjust your responses accordingly. You should be able to be much lighter in the hand and more subtle with your lateral aids.

*The need to reward your horse by relaxing the pressure the instant he has done as he has been asked cannot be over-emphasised.*

## **Untacking**

When removing the combination, it is important to unhook the jaw strap or loosen it as much as possible, so that when the horse opens his mouth to release the mouthpiece, he doesn't cause himself pressure against a partially-opened jaw and nose strap.

## **Care of Your Myler Combination Bit**

Like any piece of equipment, care should be taken to fit the combination correctly and to check its fit and condition on a daily basis.

Further details are provided in the swing ticket on each new bit and every retailer has been trained to advise on its correct fit and use.

The mouthpiece should be wiped down after used to ensure the corrosion of the sweet iron takes place evenly and gradually. The rawhide, cord, and man-made jaw strap may be wiped gently with a damp cloth.

Leather jaw straps and nosebands can be cleaned like any other leather strap.



## Myler Combination Bit Accessories

- Replacement Noseband Kits, Leather or Rawhide, in three sizes: 4 ½"; 5"; & 5 ½" – 6"
- Fleece Noseband Sleeves, with Velcro closure, available in black or white
- Replacement Jaw Straps. The old-style leather curb strap has been replaced with a black man-made strap which is more resistant to stretching and cracking
- Curb Hook for Jaw Strap for quicker fastening & unfastening
- Support String to ensure noseband stays up during early use

