

TACK TALK

W

Bridle Path

E'VE TALKED in recent months about the various parts of the bridle; now let's talk about how to use it.

1. When you go to bridle your horse, first untie his lead rope from the fence. Tie the halter around the neck, to give yourself a "safety net" in case he tries to pull away. The same is true when you take off the bridle; never try to re-halter your horse with a halter that's tied to the fence. Only one good thing could happen (your horse is compliant and lets you do it), but there are lots of bad things that could happen.

I like to handle my horses around their heads a lot, to get them accustomed to haltering and bridling. They're relaxed about the process.

2. First, holding the headstall up with your right hand, ask the horse to accept the bit. You can put your left thumb in the corner of his mouth to ask him to open up, while holding the bit in place with your fingers.

3. Fold one ear forward and pull the headstall over it, then do the same with the other ear. Most bridles adjust on the left side (some

have adjustments on both sides), so I'm in position if I need to move the buckle up or down a notch.

If you're using a new headstall or bridling a different horse, it's better to have it too big rather than too small. If it's too big, you can adjust it once it's on the horse. But if it's too small, you'll be trying to let it out halfway through the bridling process.

4. People have different ideas about how tight the bit should be in the mouth, but generally speaking, you don't want it to be pulling too much on the corners of the mouth or hanging too loose, either.

5. When it's time to unbridle the horse, slide the headstall forward off his ears and then allow him to release the bit. Don't pull the bit out of his mouth, just let it release naturally. This is another good time to pet his head and encourage him to relax. ■

AQHA member Dennis Moreland has been making quality working tack since 1976. Visit www.dmtack.com to learn more about his Dennis Moreland Second Edition line.

By Dennis

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Keep these tips in mind for easy bridling and unbridling.



AMERICA'S HORSE PHOTOS