The purpose of this USEF/WDAA Attire and Equipment Guide is to provide an explanation for and additional information about the appointments (attire and tack) allowed under the USEF Western Dressage Division and WDAA rules, Chapter 5. In the case of conflicting verbiage, the current online USEF Rule Book will supersede this document.

At Federation licensed 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 checking of tack, bits, etc. A horse must be eliminated from the test just completed if the bit/tack is in violation of the rules and/or the tongue has been tied. All horses in each class/test must be inspected upon completion of their ride. 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, a designated individual must assume the responsibility of overseeing the checking of tack and bits.

**APPOINTMENTS/TACK/BITS**

**Bridles:**
Any western type headstall must be used, with or without a cavesson as described below. Native and national bridles are permitted. Additionally, a bitless bridle of Western style made of leather or leather like material is also acceptable.

- A breastplate and/or crupper may be used.
- A western cavesson (pencil bosal, braided or plain) with space for two fingers placed between the cavesson and the jowl of the horse is allowed. No metal, studs of any kind or other substances can be used in conjunction with or part of a western leather cavesson.

**Rope cavesson - NOT LEGAL**
Cavesson must be leather. The knot is also not legal.

**LEGAL leather cavesson – smooth on the inside**

**Pencil bosal - LEGAL**
**Hackamore:**
A hackamore (bosal) is permitted on a horse of any age, 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.

*The hackamore pictured to the right illustrates the legal use of electric tape added to the bosal. The bosal below illustrates the illegal use of latex, sheepskin or bandage material.*

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 with a romal; a bit rein and a mecate rein may be held in each hand. *Bits must meet specifications.* *Rein restrictions listed below apply to a Two-Rein bridle as well as regular bridle.*

Romal reins can be used only with a curb bit and can only be ridden with one hand.

A rider can ride with two hands with only split reins, connected reins, or mecate type reins (without the popper such as in Romal reins).

Horsehair or rope reins and mecate are allowed for bosals and snaffles. The mecate can be tied to the saddle horn or held by the rider.
The photo to the right illustrates one style of bitless bridle.

**Snaffle Bits:**
- Any 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.
- A standard snaffle is a conventional O-ring, Egg Butt, 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 circumference of the ring must be free of any rein, curb, or headstall attachments that would provide leverage. *(Note: a rein through a slotted ring would not be a legal snaffle bit.)*
- 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 with a gradual decrease to the center of the snaffle. 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 ¼ inch (19.05 mm), measured top-to-bottom, and must lie flat in the horse’s mouth.
- A Mullen Mouth (solid mouthpiece), barrel mouthpiece, full cheeks or Naptha Bits (plastic or rubber) 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.

![Image of a bit hobble]

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

**Examples of LEGAL Snaffle Mouthpieces:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inlaid two-piece mouthpiece - LEGAL</th>
<th>D-ring – LEGAL if size meets rule requirement</th>
<th>O-ring; three piece mouthpiece with barrel - LEGAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Inlaid two-piece mouthpiece" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="D-ring" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="O-ring; three piece mouthpiece with barrel" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-ring bit; barrel mouthpiece - LEGAL</td>
<td>Flat mouthpiece – LEGAL if bar meets measurement requirements</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="O-ring bit; barrel mouthpiece" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="O-ring bit; barrel mouthpiece" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Flat mouthpiece" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="O-ring bit; barrel mouthpiece" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL if reins are attached above bit hobble/curb strap</td>
<td>LEGAL <em>center hinged joint if smooth</em></td>
<td>LEGAL if connecting ring and bars meet measurement requirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Examples of ILLEGAL Snaffle Mouthpieces:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bicycle chain bit – NOT LEGAL</th>
<th>Twisted bit – NOT LEGAL</th>
<th>Wire wrapped bit – NOT smooth, NOT LEGAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twisted bit – NOT LEGAL</td>
<td>Twisted bit – NOT LEGAL. Full cheeks are LEGAL, and keepers may be used.</td>
<td>Mouthpiece edges are sharp – NOT LEGAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid donut shape NOT LEGAL</td>
<td>Loops on inside of D-ring – NOT LEGAL</td>
<td>Kimberwick bit - NOT LEGAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Updated 1/9/15
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; rider may use one or two hands with a curb bit.

8 ½” (21.59cm) maximum shank length.

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

A Standard Western Bit is defined as a bit with leverage. It may or may not have shanks. The maximum length of the shanks is 8 ½ inches (21.59cm). Shanks may be fixed or loose. A bit which has slots for attaching the headstall and/or rein is a leverage bit and is permitted.

Bars of the mouthpiece must be round, smooth and unwrapped (except with latex) metal of ⁵/₁₆” (7.9 mm) to ³/₄” (19.05 mm) in diameter measured one inch (25 mm) from the cheek. It may be inlaid, but smooth, or latex wrapped. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three piece connecting ring of ⅛” (31.7 mm) or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of ⁵/₈” to ³/₄” (9.5 mm – 19.05 mm) measured top to bottom with the maximum length of 2” (50 mm), which lies flat in the horse’s mouth, is acceptable.

The port must be no higher than 3 ½” (8.89 cm). Port is measured from the lower side of mouthpiece bar to top of port. Rollers attached to the center of the bit and covers are acceptable.
Wire on the braces (above the bars and attaching to the spade) of a traditional spade bit is acceptable. Slobber guard on a curb bit is permitted.

Reins must be attached to each shank. Split reins, romal reins, rein chains (spade bit) or loop reins are allowed.

**Examples of LEGAL Curb Bits and Attachments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of wire on braces of a traditional spade bit - LEGAL</th>
<th>Example of rein chains – LEGAL with a spade bit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL – inlaid, wrapped with latex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-breed – LEGAL</td>
<td>LEGAL bit design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light lip strap – LEGAL</td>
<td>Slobber guard – LEGAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Threading of lip strap between layers of curb strap - LEGAL

LEGAL – roller on bar forms a continuous line

Very short, smooth, rounded rivets or knobs used to join the mouthpiece together & extend a tiny bit below the bar are LEGAL.

Rollers attached to the center of the bit are allowed, and may extend below the bar. LEGAL

Jointed mouthpieces are allowed with a curb bit and may consist of 2 or 3 pieces. LEGAL

Broken mouthpiece allowed. Bars may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped. LEGAL

Illegal Bits:
All curb bits must be free of mechanical devices. Nothing such as extensions, rivets or prongs, may protrude below the mouthpiece (bars). The following are prohibited:

- Slip or gag bits, and donut or flat polo mouthpieces and kimberwicks.
- Roping bits with reins attached to a single rein at the center of a cross bar.
- Any rein design or other devices which increase the effective length and thereby the leverage of the shank of a standard western bit.
- Anything that alters the intended use of equipment as provided for in the description of appointments for a given class/test.

Examples of ILLEGAL Curb Bits and Attachments

Rigid donut mouthpiece
NOT LEGAL

Gag bit – NOT LEGAL

Twisted bars – NOT LEGAL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bars curve downwards, making a slight point</strong> – <em>NOT LEGAL</em></th>
<th><strong>NOT LEGAL – prongs extend below bars of bit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Flat mouthpiece – NOT LEGAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roping bit – NOT LEGAL – reins must attach to each shank</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rein extensions that lock movement – NOT LEGAL if tight enough to lock onto the bit.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Example of a mechanical device that alters use of equipment – NOT LEGAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOT LEGAL – bars are twisted, not rounded</strong></td>
<td><strong>NOT LEGAL – bars are flat, not rounded</strong></td>
<td><strong>NOT LEGAL – separate rollers do not create a continuous line.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curb straps/Curb Chains:
Curb chains, if used, 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.

Examples of LEGAL and ILLEGAL Curb Straps/Curb Chains:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEGAL style if measures at least ½” in width</th>
<th>LEGAL ONLY if used with a snaffle bit as a bit hobble below the reins. NOT LEGAL if used with a curb bit</th>
<th>NOT LEGAL – ‘bumps’ on the inside – does not lie flat against the horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT LEGAL – round bar welded to inside of chain</td>
<td>NOT LEGAL – tacks on inside</td>
<td>NOT LEGAL – metal bar sewn between layers of leather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL ONLY if used with a snaffle bit as a bit hobble. NOT LEGAL if used with a curb bit</td>
<td>LEGAL style if measures at least ½” in width</td>
<td>LEGAL style if measures at least ½” in width</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Saddles:
A standard stock saddle, national, working saddle, Aussie, native or western side saddle is to be used but silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. A horn is not required but western style fenders are required. Tapaderos are permitted, except in Western Dressage Equitation. Padding or pads on the seat of the saddle are permitted.

Whips:
One whip no longer than 47.2” (120 cm) including lash, are permitted in all classes/tests.

Illegal Equipment:
1. 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 “easy-boots”) or tail bandages and any form of blinkers, earmuffs or plugs, and nose covers, are cause for elimination. Protective manufactured leg wraps and bell boots are permitted, with color matching natural color of the horse as much as possible.
2. Fly hoods (ear covers) will only be permitted in order to protect horses from insects. The fly hoods should be discreet and should not cover the horse’s eyes, and will only be permitted in extreme cases at the discretion of the judge. Permission must be granted prior to the class and applies to all competitors in the class.
3. Rein additions or attachments except for rein chains used in conjunction with a spade bit.
4. Any decoration of the horse with extravagant items, such as ribbons or flowers, etc. in the mane, tail, etc.
5. Flash, figure eight or dropped nose bands.
6. Mechanical Hackamores

ATTIRE

Required apparel:
   a. Suitable western hat
   b. Long-sleeved shirt with any type of color; short sleeves may be worn at the discretion of the judge.
   c. Trousers, pants, a one-piece long sleeved equitation suit provided it includes a collar.
   d. Boots.
   e. Native and National attire can be worn when riding in Native or National tack.
Optional apparel:
   a. Necktie, kerchief, bolo tie, or pin.
   b. Vest, jacket, coat, and/or sweater.
   c. Spurs of Western or English style. Western spurs with rowels must not have sharp tines.
   d. Chaps, shotgun chaps, or chinks.
   e. 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 ring stewards starting at least 30 minutes before the first scheduled ride.

1. The restrictions regarding Illegal Equipment (see WD120) 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.
2. Fly hoods (ear covers) that do not cover the horse’s eyes are permitted in warm-up and other training areas.
3. 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).
4. 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.
5. The following whips are permitted for schooling only:
   a. One whip no longer than 47.2 inches (120 cm), including lash, may be carried by the rider when mounted.
   b. One longeing whip is permitted only when longeing. There is no restriction on the length of whip permitted for working a horse in hand.

Equipment Check Process for Western Dressage

General Information:
1. Tack and bits on both sides of each horse must be inspected and checked for each class/test and must be done immediately as the horse leaves the arena.
2. New disposable gloves must be available for and used by bit inspectors if a mouth piece must be handled by the inspector.
3. 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 you use it every time before you check a bit if you have previously touched a mouthpiece. Same with cleaning the measuring device. Hand sanitizer and/or a small spray bottle of rubbing alcohol works great.
4. Competitions will drop the bridle of the horse, removing the bit to below the horse's mouth. RIDER IS TO DISMOUNT PRIOR TO DROPPING BRIDLE.
5. Checking of the bridle must be done with the greatest caution, as some horses are very touchy and sensitive about their mouths.
6. Random pulling of protective manufactured leg wraps will also occur at this time.
7. Any evidence of blood on the horse’s mouth or sides or the addition of substances or devices behind protective manufactured leg wraps will result in elimination of the entry for that class/test.

**Equipment Check for Western Dressage**

In Western Dressage, the equipment of each entry is checked by the USEF Category 2 Steward or the designated inspector for that competition. Every entry is checked following each test that is ridden. 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 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), full cheek keeper (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 between the 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. 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. 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 note 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. This is to prevent cross contamination between horses.

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 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, measure using a vertical line from the upper most part of the headstall slot to the rein ring. – see illustration at right.

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 use a metal detector to check for any 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.

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. You will walk clockwise around the horse from the left side of the horse’s head.

24. As you walk around to check the saddle and to check for cuts on the legs or sides of the horse, stay close to the horse. I have never had a horse consider kicking me, but if one did, I would want to be very close to lessen the blow.

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.