

## Lesson 8: Equipment and Facilities

With horses, having good equipment and facilities is a must, given the horse's strength. Buildings provide a safe environment from the elements and pests, along with providing a place to care for sick or injured animals. Using equipment that is in poor condition can result in injury to the horse and/or the handler.

### Types and Uses of Tack

Tack comes in many varieties and generally refers to any equipment that is used during riding or handling. Styles of tack include Western, English, show, and work. The type of tack used will depend on what the rider wants to accomplish. For example, if one is working cattle, a show saddle is not appropriate.

The halter and bridle are tack that a rider/handler uses to communicate with the horse and give directions. The halter is simply a bridle that doesn't have a bit connected to it. (See Figure 8.1.) A halter can be made out of nylon webbing, rope, or leather. Each material has advantages and disadvantages. The rope halter is inexpensive and easily made, but easier for the horse to break. Nylon halters are more expensive than rope halters but are stronger and easier to find. The leather halter is the most expensive but also the most attractive and is used when showing.

A bridle's main function is to hold the bit in the horse's mouth, which transmits commands from the rider. There are two main types of bridles—Western and English. (See

Figure 8.2.) There are many variations of both and many different types of bits that can be used.

The saddle is the next piece of tack. (See Figure 8.3.) There are two main styles—Western and English. The main difference between the two saddles is that the Western saddle has a high pommel and cantle, and the English saddle looks almost flat. The Western saddle was designed for use by cowboys as they worked and roped cattle.

Figure 8.2 - Bridle Nomenclature and Adjustment Points

**Credit:** *Choosing, Assembling, and Using Bridles (G2845)*

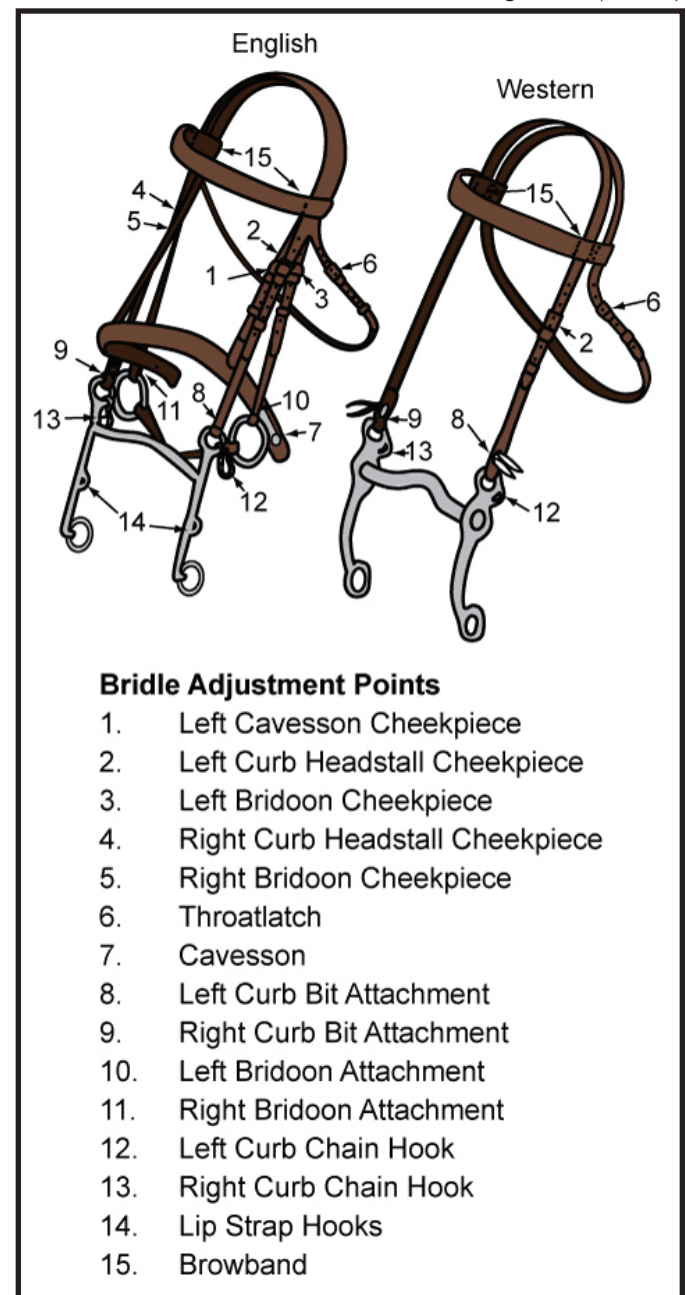
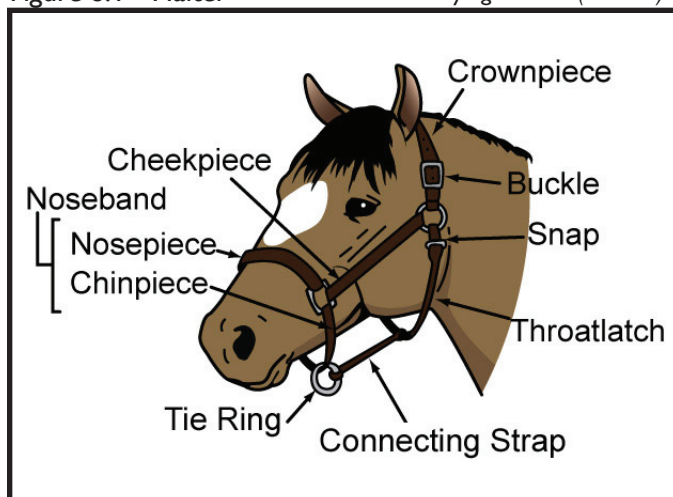


Figure 8.1 - Halter **Credit:** *Haltering and Tying Horses (G2844)*



## Equine Science

A saddle pad goes between the horse's back and the saddle to protect the horse from the rubbing of the saddle as the horse moves. Saddle pads come in several sizes and thicknesses; the one chosen will depend on the specific saddle.

Blankets are used to cover a horse in the winter on cool nights if the horse has been sweating from exercise. This lessens the chance of a horse catching cold or coming down with pneumonia.

There are many different accessories that can be used when riding for pleasure or when working cattle. Some accessories most commonly used are chaps, which are made out of leather and protect the rider's legs; spurs, which attach to a boot's heel and help give commands to the horse; and splints, which go on the horse's front legs to protect it from injury. Some horse owners will need a harness also. (See Figure 8.5.)

### Adjusting Tack

The size of the horse is the deciding factor for choosing appropriate equipment. It is very important that all tack be properly fitted to the horse. If the bridle is too loose, the rider might not be able to get the horse to respond and might lose control. If it is too tight, it can injure the

horse. A properly adjusted bridle will only cause one or two wrinkles in the corners of the horse's mouth.

The throat latch strap should be adjusted to allow two or three fingers between it and the horse's jaw. If the throat latch is too small, it will restrict the horse's head and could interfere with breathing.

The saddle should be of proper size for the horse and rider. The saddle blanket should fit the saddle. Before saddling a horse, make sure that the horse's back and girth (mid-section) are clean, as well as the girth strap and saddle blanket. The girth strap should be tightened firmly, but the gullet (the underside of the pommel) should not rub the horse's wither (front shoulders).

Equipment adjustment will vary, depending on the style of equipment used.

### Bits and How They Work

Bits are the mechanical means from which cues are communicated to the horse from the rider. There are various types of bits, and the ones used will depend on the horse and the style of riding. Some of the more common bits are snaffle, curb, pelham, rearing, hackamore, and bosal. Bits act on pressure points on the horse's head,

Figure 8.3 - Saddle Styles

**Credit:** *Equine Management and Production*, pp. H1-5. Used with permission.

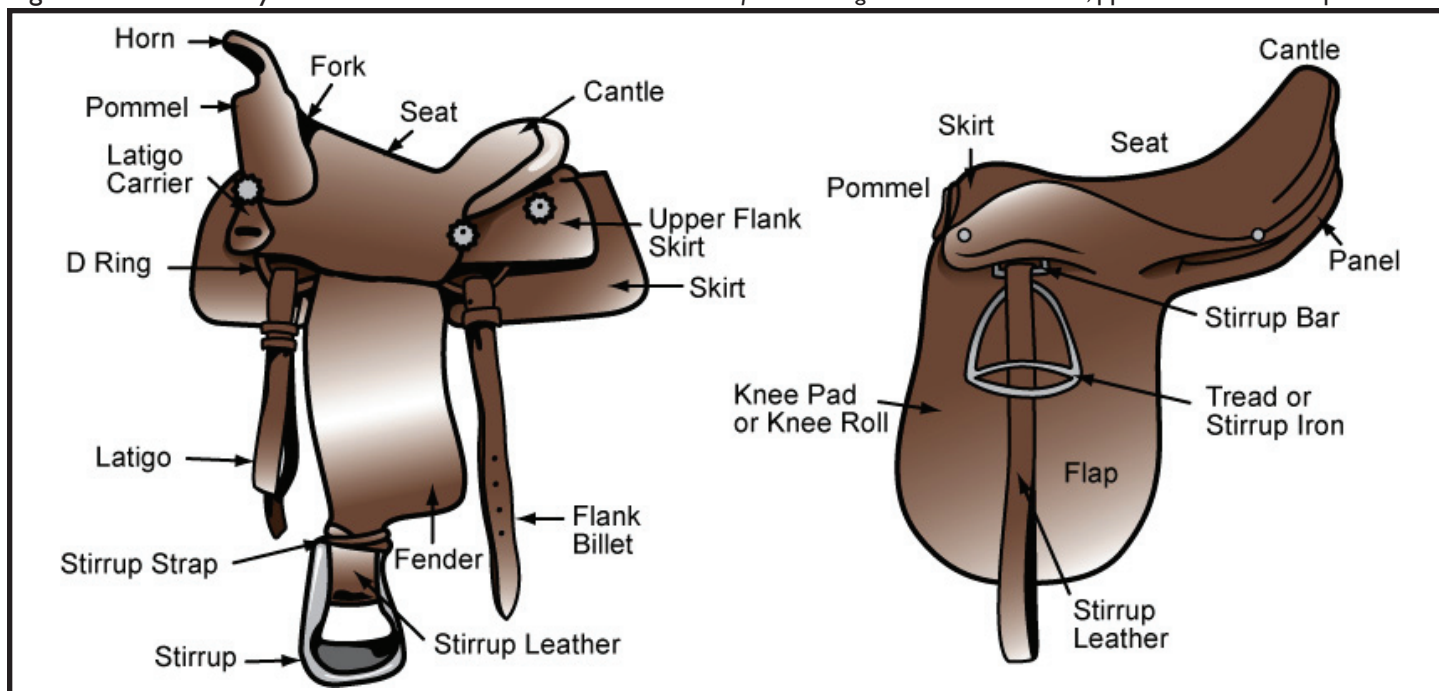
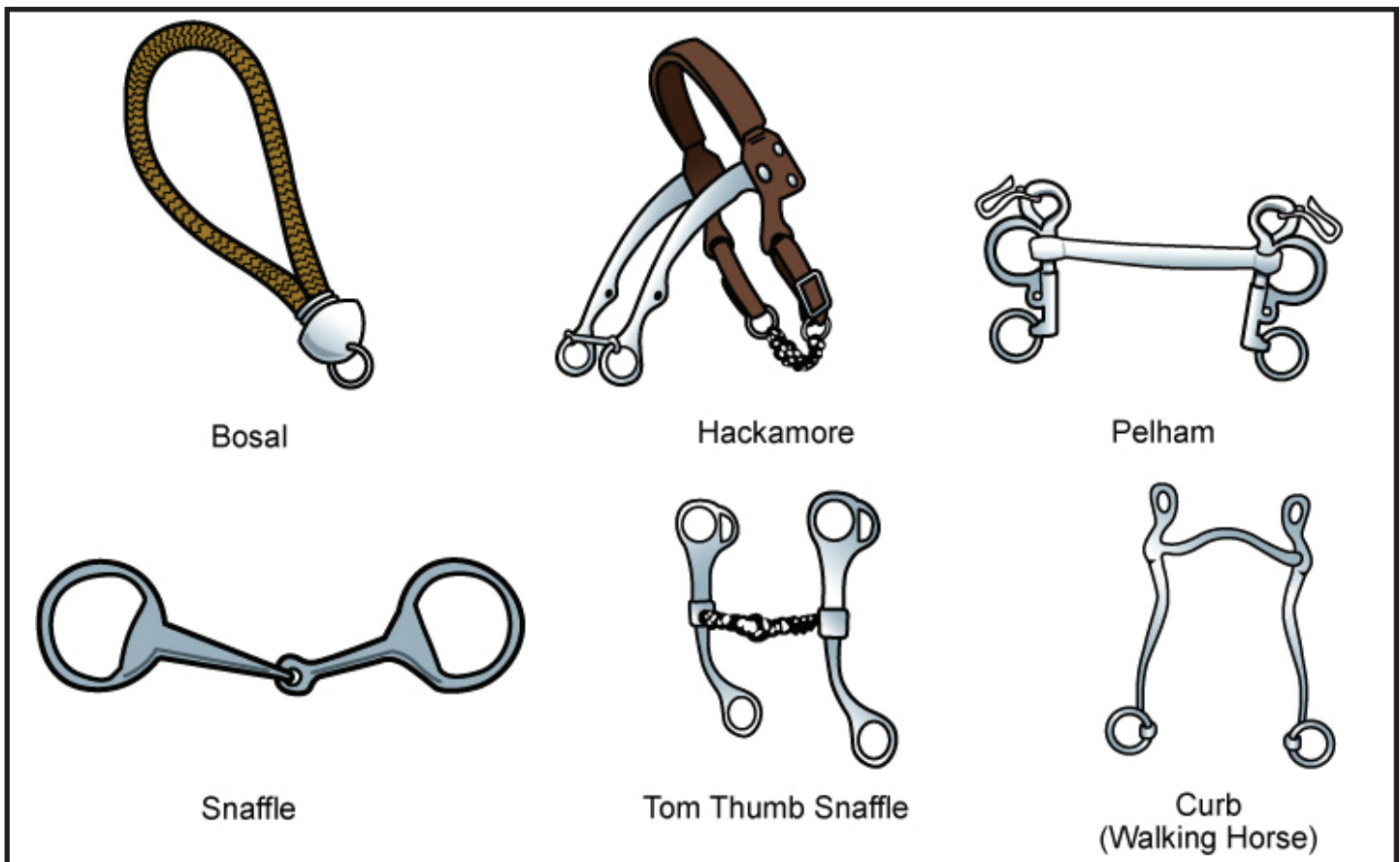


Figure 8.4 - Types of Bits



such as the poll, nose, lips, chin, tongue, and the roof of the mouth.

The snaffle bit is a mouthpiece with a ring at each end where the reins attach. When the rider pulls on the reins, it puts direct pressure on the corner of the horse's mouth. The smaller the diameter of the mouthpiece, the harsher the bit is. The snaffle bit can be a solid piece or a piece that is jointed in the middle. Some will have a cheek piece to prevent the bit from being pulled through the horse's mouth. (See Figure 8.4.)

Curb bits have shanks that act as levers. Pressure is applied to the tongue, bars, corners, and roof of the mouth. The bit rests on the bars of the mouth. (Bars are the spaces on the gums between front and rear teeth.) The longer the shank, the more leverage and the harsher the bit. Curb bits can also have curb chains on them, which exert more pressure in the horse's mouth. Curb bits can have straight or jointed mouthpieces. Some bits have an extra loop extending upward called a spade, which exerts pressure to the roof of the mouth.

The pelham bit is a curb bit with two sets of reins and is used in English style riding. This bit gives more control than snaffle or curb bits.

The hackamore has no mouthpiece—just a head stall and chin strap. It is used frequently by trainers on young horses. This prevents injuring the sensitive mouth of a young horse.

A bosal or bosal hackamore is very similar to the hackamore, except that the bosal has no chains or metal parts. Both exert pressure on the outside muzzle of the horse.

### Types of Reins

There are two types of reins—single and split. A single rein is one piece with ends that attach to the bit. Split reins are two separate pieces, each attaching to one side of the bit.

## Equine Science

Double and multiple reins are variations on single and split reins. Double reins are used with bits such as the pelham. Multiple reins are used with a team of horses pulling a wagon (one set of reins for each horse in the team).

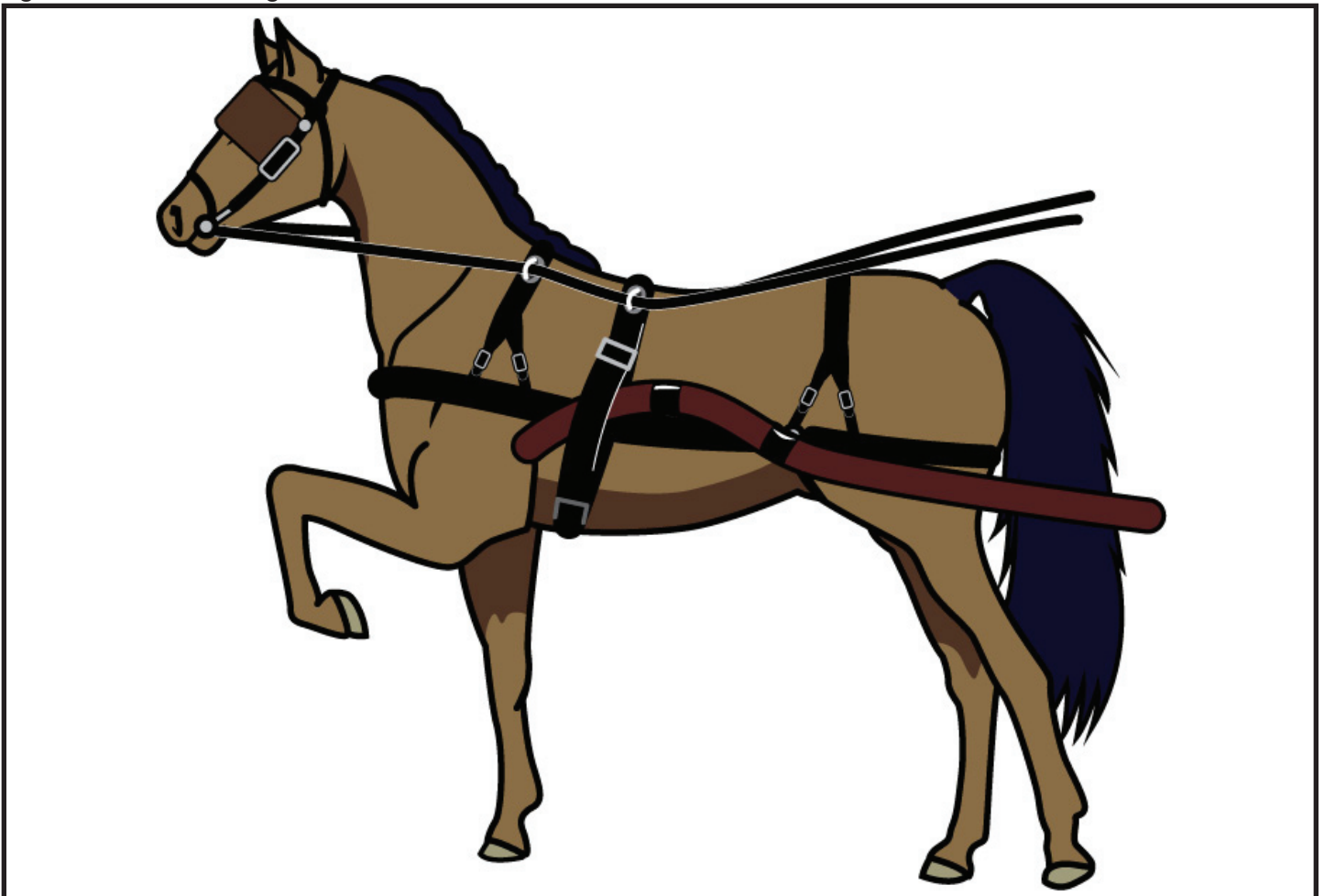
### Equipment and Their Uses

Proper equipment for horses includes feeders, waterers, facilities, first aid kits, and grooming supplies. Feeding equipment can be as simple as five-gallon buckets for waterers and feed buckets, or it can be prefabricated especially for horses. There are advantages and disadvantages to each, with the main difference being cost. Feeding can also be done without any containers at all by pouring the feed on the ground. However, the biggest disadvantage is a greater chance of the horse picking up parasites from the ground. Using a watering fountain costs more but will help ensure available, fresh, clean water supply.

Every owner should have a grooming kit and a first aid kit on hand. These, too, can be simple (containing only the basics) or they can be very complete and contain everything available for use with horses. A basic first aid kit should contain scissors, gauze, rolled cotton, antiseptic, crepe bandage, vet thermometer, alcohol, iodine, a clean bucket, tape, antibiotic dressing, and a twitch. (See Restraints in Lesson 9 for more information on twitches.) First aid kits should also contain vet wrap, a clingy support wrap. Vet thermometers are specially designed for rectal use with livestock.

A grooming kit should contain at least a brush, hoof pick, sweat scraper, body brush, mane-and-tail comb, curry comb, clippers, shampoo, wash cloth, and a clean bucket. Each kit will be individualized, depending on owner preferences. Disinfect grooming tools and equipment routinely to prevent the spread of disease.

Figure 8.5 - Horse in Single Harness





# Equipment and Facilities

The final part of equipment deals with transportation. Horse trailers are a big investment that must be justified. For an owner who does not go to rodeos or horse shows frequently, consider hiring someone to haul the horse(s) when needed. If a trailer is justified, consider several factors. It must be both road-safe (in good condition) and safe inside. If it is larger than a one-horse trailer, it should have a partition and adequate padding. If needed, a ramp should be long enough so that it is not too steep. Ramps should have traction so the horse will not slip while walking on it.

## Costs of Equipment and Facilities

Depending on the owner's preferences and budget, equipment can be minimal or plentiful. When purchasing any equipment, put safety considerations first. Fencing is a major safety concern and should be as strong as possible. Fencing can be made from many different materials (post and rails, woven wire, pipe, boards, or wire) but should never be barbed wire.

Facilities range from simple and inexpensive to very costly. Regardless, facilities should always provide shelter to avoid such health problems as rain scald, a fungus that develops during continuous rain. Some kind of feeding and watering equipment is also needed. Horses kept in stalls need regular exercise.

There are numerous manufacturers of equine equipment, and prices will vary from dealer to dealer. Whether an item is portable or stationary also affects its cost. Get to know how something new works before purchasing it to make sure it will work for the desired operation.

Owning a horse is a big responsibility; even with the simplest of operations, it will not be inexpensive. Equipment needs to be maintained and occasionally replaced.

## Summary

Understanding the different types of equipment used to handle horses helps make owning a horse safe and enjoyable. There is a wide assortment of products on the market that are designed just for horses. Horse enthusiasts should learn how a piece of equipment works before deciding to purchase it. Will it fit their needs? The style of equipment selected will depend on the type of riding or work that will be done, what the owner wishes to accomplish, and the size of the horse.

## Credits

*Curriculum Material for Agriscience 334: Equine Science (Topic #8899-B).* College Station, TX: Instructional Materials Service, Texas A&M University, 1990.

Ensminger, M. Eugene. *Horses and Horsemanship*. 6th ed. Danville, IL: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 1990.

*Equine Management and Production*. Stillwater, OK: Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center, Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1990.

Hawcroft, Tim. *The Complete Book of Horse Care*. New York: Howell Book House, Inc., 1994.

University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division agricultural publications

- a. G2844: Haltering and Tying Horses
- b. G2845: Choosing, Assembling and Using Bridles
- c. G2887: Selecting a Saddle