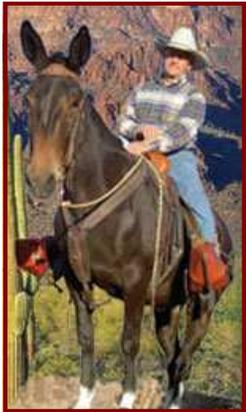


Bridling Issues

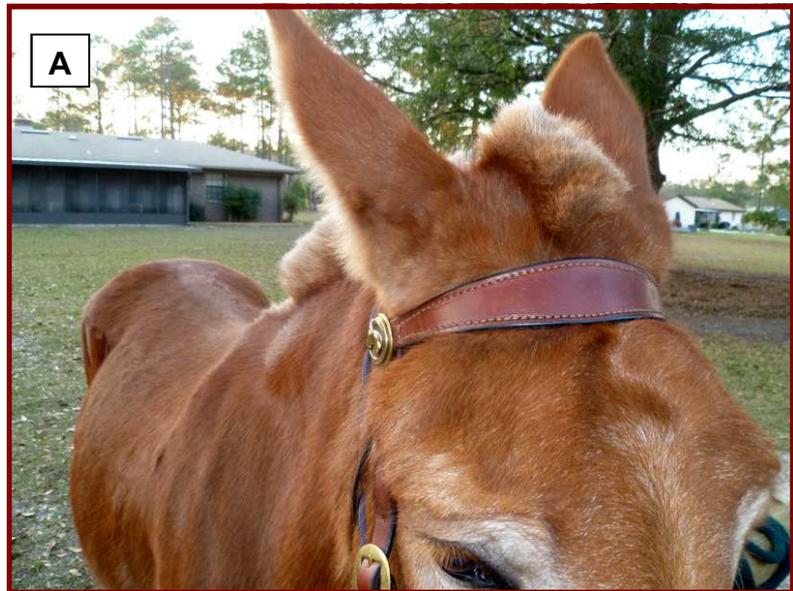


Hard to Bridle By Steve Edwards Queen Valley Mule Ranch

Properly fitting tack is the most important part of our communication. Mules and donkeys only understand "comfortable," "uncomfortable". They rarely understand the few words that we use to communicate with them. Our bridle, bit, and reins are extremely important in communicating stop, go, right, and left. The mule's head and skeletal structure come from the donkey side of the mule. It's imperative we remember that the mule is made up of two other animals; the horse being the mother and the donkey being the father. The teeth are basically the same, except for in a lot of cases, we have a longer jaw line.

It's essential that we balance the mule's teeth. Then, once a year float the teeth, simply because the equine teeth are erupting almost on a daily basis. I also suggest pulling wolf teeth and putting a bit notch in as well.

The bridle must be designed in such a way that both ears are able to go through the crown with plenty of room. A single-ear crown tends not to balance the bit correctly. Again, plenty of room should be given to the ears (note picture A).



Foundational training starts with my mule rider's martingale, which has a double twisted wire snaffle bit. I believe this bit gives the most communication using the least amount of resistance. I have found that with a smooth snaffle bit, most riders tend to do a lot of pulling, which causes the mule brace all five major neck muscles and the throat latch. A snaffle bit is for building a foundation and fixing problems. By the time the mule or donkey is three years old the only time you would need to use a snaffle bit is to fix a problem or reinforce a foundation.



My finished bit is a correctional tight bit with a sweet-iron mouthpiece (note picture B). This bit hinges on each corner and two places at the port, which gives the tongue relief.

The reason I noted the types of bits and bridles is that the majority of bridles that we use tend to not be designed for the mule. Balance between bit and bridle