

# **Tellington TTouch Training - TTEAM**

## **Linda Tellington-Jones**

### **THE TTEAM TRAINING BIT**

The TTEAM rollerbit is a stainless steel bit with a copper roller and curved, loose-jawed shanks that we use as a training bit with two sets of narrow, light reins. Used in this way, it acts somewhat like a Pelham, but the copper roller and higher port are the keys to softening the horse's jaw, activating the hindquarters and creating much more "swing" in the back.

The use of two reins allows you to balance the horse with the top rein and tip the nose with the bottom rein, if necessary. The port is angled back slightly to allow room for the tongue and palate. The copper roller is slightly raised above the tongue and requires the horse to lift its tongue to roll the roller, which has the effect of softening the jaw. The loose, curved-back shank helps to soften the poll, which in turn activates the pelvis and frees the back. In contrast, a straight-shanked bit has the tendency to flex a horse at the poll more stiffly.

We've used the rollerbit extensively on most breeds, and most horses seem to really like it. Many horse people, having learned that the snaffle is the only acceptable bit, think it must be brutal because of the high port and long shanks. Although the bit has the potential to be severe, I find that riders at every level do extremely well with it with a bit of instruction. One must only be open-minded and watch the difference in a horse's attitude, balance and way of going to begin to consider the possibility of using it for training. For best results, keep your contact on the top rein light and the bottom rein usually loose.

Before tacking up, enlist a friend to take turns "wearing" the bridle and holding the reins as we do in TTEAM clinics. This will help you to become more comfortable using double reins and feeling the light contact generally used with the rollerbit. These ground exercises are also shown in my "Riding With Awareness" video. If possible, work with a TTEAM practitioner to help you fit and use the rollerbit the first time.

The TTEAM Training Bit (roller bit) is available in 5", 5.5" and 5.75". The bits are shipped by UPS usually in one or two days after your order. Allow for 5 working days.

## FITTING and USING THE TTEAM TRAINING ROLLERBIT

Here are hints to help you fit the TTEAM Training Rollerbit and to use it to its maximum advantage.

- The headstall is attached to the top ring of the bit. The curb chain attaches here also. Sometimes people attach the curb chain in the same slot as the top rein. **This will not work!**
- The top (snaffle) rein fits into the slit in the shank that is even with the mouth-piece. The bottom rein is fastened at the bottom of the shank.
- Reins that are 5/8" for the top and 3/8" for the bottom are the easiest to use. We recommend and sell sets of reins in these widths for the TTEAM Training rollerbit.
- The curb chain attaches to the uppermost ring of the bit, the same as the headstall. Adjust the curb chain in this way: When the bottom of the shank is lightly pulled back to a 45 degree angle from the line of the mouth, the curb chain should make contact with the chin groove. NOTE: If curb chain is too loose, the port of the bit will hit the roof of the mouth before the curb chain makes contact. This is very ineffective, as well as uncomfortable for the horse. Equally ineffective is a curb chain that is too tight. In both cases, the horse is likely to react unfavorably -pulling, overbending, evading.
- A noseband is essential. Adjust it approximately two fingers' width below the cheekbone. A second adjustment is that you should be able to get two/three fingers sideways between the noseband and jawbone.
- Check the top of the bit (where the headstall is attached) to be sure that it does not press into the horse's cheekbones. If it is so narrow as to press or rub the cheeks, it can be widened easily by putting the top into a vise and bending outward slightly.
- Be sure that there is a least one-quarter inch of clearance between the top of the shank (where the headstall attaches) and the horse's cheek.
- Check the width of the bit relative to the width of the horse's mouth. A too-narrow bit could cause pinching by the moveable-shanks. Secondly, to avoid hitting the horse's teeth, adjust the headstall so that the bit is neither too high nor too low in the mouth. A "rule of thumb" says adjust the bit so there is a good wrinkle in the corner of the horse's mouth, but keep in mind the individuality of each horse. Most male, and some female, horses have canine teeth, between the incisors and the molars. The canine are closer to the incisors; wolf teeth closer to the molars.
- Notice how your horse accepts the bit. It is not uncommon for a horse to play actively with the roller in the beginning and then roll it occasionally. If your horse does not work the roller at all, carefully put two fingers in the side of his mouth and tap the tongue to encourage rolling. Check the teeth -if they are sharp, your horse may not roll the bit.
- We suggest that you allow the horse to carry the rollerbit for 10 - 15 minutes before mounting. Put on a halter over the rollerbit and lead the horse with a line from the halter at a walk and trot, work through the TTEAM Confidence Course or lunge the horse for a few minutes. Attach the longe line to the side ring of the halter. Before doing this work, weave the reins through the

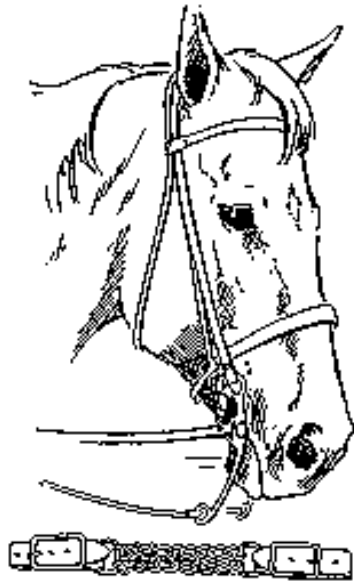
throatlatch. You will often see a change in a horse's balance and self-carriage just by carrying the bit.

- Putting a body wrap or promise rope on the horse during longeing also helps to encourage engagement. Many people have reported that longeing with the rollerbit and body wrap (rather than side-reins) helps improve transitions, posture, balance and engagement, especially with horses who tend to drag their hind legs.
- The top (snaffle) rein is used to balance the horse. The bottom (curb) rein helps you to flex your horse at the poll and to stop a difficult horse. It is better to start with a fairly loose bottom (curb) rein so that you and the horse get accustomed to the bit.
- With a young horse or an inexperienced rider, you can remove the curb rein instead of using two sets.
- The TTEAM Training bit requires a much lighter contact than a snaffle or double bridle. Your hands should be slightly open with your thumbs lightly bent. Tightly gripped reins limit flexibility in rider and horse. The horse will likely react with evasions.
- The contact is like that of a Pelham, so avoid riding with as steady a contact as you might with a snaffle, or your horse may become overbent and stiff. It is usually better to start with a fairly loose rein on the bottom (curb) so you and the horse can become accustomed to the bit.

Although most people are not doing so intentionally, there is a tendency for some riders to balance on the reins. Using a TTEAM Balance Rein along with the top (snaffle) rein of the rollerbit will help you avoid balancing off the horse's mouth. When you ride off the curb rein alone, you don't have nearly as much control.

Hold the reins so that the snaffle (top) rein is on the outside of the baby finger and the curb (bottom) rein is on the inside. It is also important to maintain a bend in the thumb joint when holding and using the reins. Drape the reins over your index finger between the first and second knuckle joints, and place your thumbprint over the rein with a bend in your thumb joint. This allows you to use your fingers to give signals and keep your hand and forearm soft.

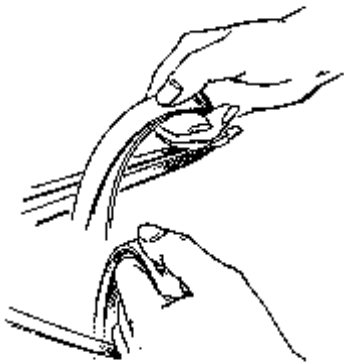
- Remember to allow your horse to stretch and lengthen his neck occasionally.
- When removing the bridle, be careful that your horse doesn't bang his teeth into the bit. Place the reins high on his neck (just behind his ears) and hold them with one hand. After unfastening the curb chain, noseband and throatlatch, hold the top of the crownpiece with your free hand. Slide the bridle over the ears, keeping your hand pressed against the horse's forehead. Maintain contact with the horse's face and slide it down until the horse drops the bit. This will keep the port parallel with the horse's mouth; even if he raises his head the bit will not bang against his teeth.



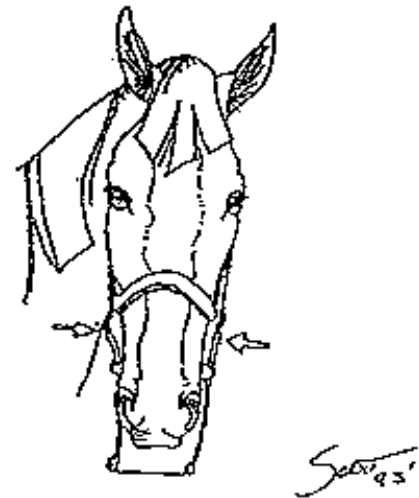
Curb chain makes contact when the shank moves to a 45 degree angle from line of mouth.



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Bit adjusted away from cheekbones.