



DRIVING NEWS

Spokes & Spurs Inc Newsletter

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Our summer has just been flying by!! We've had such wonderful events at Charlotte's Creek and Valkyrie's Haven. I'm looking forward to the cookout and drive at Charlotte's Creek.

At our annual meeting, last December, we had quite a bit of discussion about generating interest to our world of driving for newcomers. Some great ideas were tossed around with deliberation as to how to bring this faction of horsemanship safely to beginners. As luck would have it, Tracy Raikes shared a wonderful outline that the Ohio club had utilized. With the help of our local clinicians, (how are we so fortunate to have such experienced drivers in our area?) We pulled it off!!

Thank-you to Leslye Sandberg for opening Valkyrie's Haven to these seminars. We started off in May with Carrie Ostrowski-Place giving the in-depth power point demo as well as a hands on harnessing of the horse; demonstrating correct fit and order of harnessing. June brought the Ground-driving clinic with Jacob Arnold. Jacob used one of his horses to demonstrate working a horse in a circle, working on bending and compliance. Then he brought out a pony to illustrate adding a tire to be pulled, having the pony/horse become accustomed to traces alongside the legs and changing paces. After the demo, two resident horses were brought out for anyone to try their hand at long-lining. July was our final clinic with Sterling Graburn. Sterling covered all kinds of vehicles from basic, utility carts to four wheeled marathon vehicles, presentation vehicles, an antique (what to look for in an older vehicle) as well as what harnesses are correct for each vehicle.; balance of the two wheeled cart; then a horse was brought out to show safe hitching; putting to and finishing.

The seminars were very well received! I know that I learned something new at each clinic. We had newcomers as well as some of our long time members come out. The events brought back fond memories of Gayla Driving Center hosting these types of events. We are looking forward to hosting this series again in 2026! We will be bringing new ideas; What exactly does a Navigator do?, How is a dressage test scored?-we're planning on watching a dressage test with participants given a test sheet to score then we will go over points and compare notes! These are just a few ideas and we welcome your input to keep these seminars fresh.

- I'm planning on having a board meeting soon (Sept. or Oct) at which time we will go over the calendar for 2026. We welcome your input. I will be posting the date and meeting location soon.

I'm reaching out to the club for suggestions on the December meeting. For many years we were quite fortunate to utilize the CAA conference room for our gathering. Unfortunately, for us, the Horse Park will continue to use this room to set up all of the computers that operate the, "Southern Lights" show. There simply isn't enough table space for us and I shudder to think what could happen if we were to bump into a computer or spill food for drink onto one of the computers. I visited the Secretariat Center, also at the Horse Park, but their conference room is much too small for our group. I'd like to keep the meeting in December so that more members may attend as many members leave in late Dec./early Jan. for Florida. Any suggestions? Please let me know, katdogpony@gmail.com

- Be sure to check the calendar. As I write this the World Championship Horse Pairs, Beekbergen 2025 (NED) is in full swing. I'm hoping that I can find some time to watch video of the events. Team USA is represented by Jacob Arnold, Taylor Bradish & Vernon Helmuth. We wish them the best of luck! A few of our members are there to cheer them on!

- At the end of the month the (Aug), the Suzy Stafford Clinic will be held at Charlotte's Creek. Suzy is a wonderful clinician for all levels of drivers. The clinic is full but auditors are welcome.

Oct. 24-26 will be the DT & CT at Valkyrie's Haven. This will be a newer format with ADS and USEF held over the course of the three days. Be sure to come out for this fun even, Halloween at the Haven - of course volunteers are always needed and it's the best way to share camaraderie of our sport!

*Please Join Us for this year's **Halloween At The Haven** as we offer a new format - putting together an ADS CT/DT and a USEF Short Format CDE in the same weekend! Members of either organization will be able to compete.*

HALLOWEEN AT THE HAVEN
CARRIAGE DRIVING EVENT
OCTOBER 24-26, 2025

2 EVENTS - 2 ORGANIZATIONS - 1 WEEKEND

 **ADS DRIVING TRIAL & CT**

 **USEF SHORT FORMAT CDE**

Valkyrie's Haven
487 Cynthiana Rd
Paris, KY

Entry info and details at www.valkyriehaven.com/events
Sanctioned by the American Driving Society & United States Equestrian Federation

photo credit: Bob Mischka

Volunteers Needed!

Intro to Driving

Carrie Ostrowski-Place Harnessing Clinic



Discussing harness fit and adjustment

Jacob Arnold Ground Driving Clinic



Using cones to help maintain a circle



Pulling a tire...always have a header to begin.



A new, young driver perhaps?

Sterling Graburn Carriage Clinic



Looking at a variety of vehicles. We just love the friendships here!

Demonstrating balance in the two wheel cart

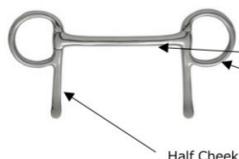


Hitched and ready to drive! Again...using a header and don't forget your whip.

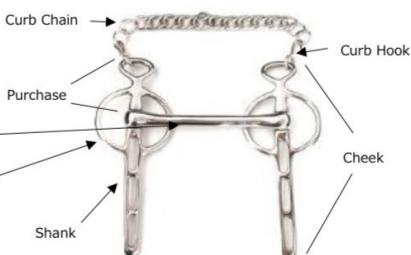
Driving Bits - Their Selection and Use

We can basically break down driving bits into two "styles", snaffle and curb.

Parts of a Snaffle Bit:



Parts of a Curb Bit:



Snaffle Bits

Far from popular belief, a snaffle is not any jointed bit. A snaffle is a direct-action bit, meaning that the rein attaches on the ring directly connected to the mouthpiece. There is no shank and no purchase. It can come in a variety of mouthpieces, both solid and jointed. Snaffles work off the lips, tongue, and bars, and may affect the palate depending on the mouthpiece.



Mullen Half Cheek Snaffle



Jointed Half Cheek Snaffle



Waterford Half Cheek Snaffle

Curb Bits

Curb bits have shanks, metal bars below the mouthpiece to which the rein is attached. Driving curb bits have multiple places to attach the rein depending on how much leverage the driver chooses to use. The Butterfly has two rein settings, while the Liverpool has 4-5 (see rein settings below on the Liverpool page). The mouthpiece can also vary. Curbs work off of various pressure points (see next page for pressure points) depending on how the bit is configured.



Medium Port Butterfly



Arch Liverpool

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To test the action any bit, grasp the mouthpiece with one hand, and use the other to simulate the action of the rein.



Snaffle Bits – all apply pressure to lips. Various mouthpieces create other actions. Here are some typical mouthpieces below:

	Mullen Half Cheek Snaffle	Arches forward; applies pressure to lips, tongue, and bars if used hard enough.	Very mild bit; good first bit to teach horse to hold the bit as there are no joints to play with.
	Single Jointed Half Cheek Snaffle	Squeezes lips, tongue, and bars; can poke horse in the palate and pinch lips between teeth and bit.	Good bit to teach the horse to stay off the bit: not what you want a driving horse to do.
	French Link Half Cheek Snaffle	Squeezes lips and tongue; does not collapse as hard on jaw as the Single Jointed Snaffle, therefore more comfortable.	Softer action than above bit; thick mouthed horses don't seem to do as well in this bit; our next step after a mullen.
	Bowman Bean Link Half Cheek Snaffle	Squeezes lips and tongue; smoother joint than the French Link Snaffle, therefore more comfortable.	Very mild bit with a similar action as the above bit. See graphic on last page.
	Waterford Half Cheek Snaffle	Lays across tongue to distribute pressure.	Currently only available in a few sizes.
	Rubber Half Cheek Snaffle	Primarily applies pressure to lips and tongue.	Very mild bit; can be too thick for some horse's mouths; few sizes.

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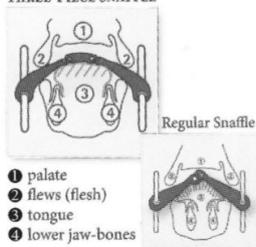
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Selecting a Driving Horse Bit

If you haven't already, see our article "I Need a New Bit" for considerations about your horse before selecting a bit.

First of all, bits do not stop horses, horses' brains stop horses. The bit is a *communication device* which can be effective or ineffective in transmitting information to the horse depending on the driver's hands (see our article "Let Go!"). The best biting techniques involve selecting the most comfortable bit to enhance the communication with the horse. If the horse is comfortable, the communication will not be hampered by pain.

THREE-PIECE SNAFFLE



Generally, thick mouthed horses seem to prefer solid mouthpieces with room for the tongue. Thinner lipped horses don't seem to mind multi-jointed bits as much. Very few horses prefer the Single Jointed Snaffle, as it pinches the lips and tongue between the bit and teeth, and can also bump the horse in the palate. A three-piece snaffle distributes tongue pressure and lays across the horse's tongue more smoothly.

The Bowman Victory bit (right) arches forward and up, creating a lot of room for the tongue and conforming better to the horse's mouth. Many horses really seem to like this bit. Because of the tongue room, the horse cannot lift the mouthpiece off the bars of the mouth as easily, so the bars may be affected more. As with any bit, care should be taken not to use the bit harshly.



Fixed Cheek Liverpool bits



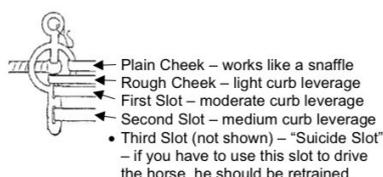
Although fixed cheek Liverpool bits can be used on a single horse, they are generally used on horses in a multiple configuration, such as a pair or four-in-hand, as the coupling rein can't rotate the cheek into the horse's face. Some are equipped with a bottom bar on the bit (shown) which helps keep the bit from catching the rein of a neighboring horse in the hitch.

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Liverpool Bits –

Multiple rein settings from snaffle to severe leverage on the third slot (on a Three-Slot Liverpool). Applies a bit of poll pressure through the curb purchase, and chin pressure through the curb chain when used in any of the curb settings. The lower the rein setting, the more the curb chain will create squeezing action on the jaw and tongue. Loose cheek bits have a more independent action than fixed cheek bits (see below). Here are some typical mouthpieces.



	Mullen Liverpool	Mouthpiece arches forward; Snaffle setting - pressure to lips Curb setting – mouthpiece rotates into tongue	Mild in snaffle setting; Mouthpiece will rotate more with a lower rein setting.
	Arch Liverpool	Mouthpiece arches up; Allows more room for the tongue in both the snaffle and curb settings.	Doesn't rotate into the horse's tongue on the curb setting. Encourages roundness.
	Bowman Victory Liverpool	45-degree hybrid of Mullen and Arch mouthpieces that arches forward and up, creating much room for the tongue.	Thick mouthed horses seem to like this bit. See graphic on last page.
	Conrad (Square Port) Liverpool	Allows much room for the tongue; can bump a low palate	Thick mouthed horses seem to like this bit. Helps develop straightness.
	Single Jointed Liverpool	Snaffle – works off corners of mouth, squeezes tongue Curb – can affect every pressure point on horse's head.	Very strong bit in the curb setting.
	French Link Liverpool	Snaffle – does not squeeze tongue as much as the Single Jointed Liverpool Curb – can affect every pressure point, but less likely to affect palate.	Strong action in curb setting. Good bit for those drivers who want a traditional driving cheek, but only use the snaffle rein.

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Butterfly (or Post) Bits –

Have both “snaffle” and “curb” settings for the rein. Applies a bit of poll pressure through the purchase, and chin pressure through the curb chain when used on the curb setting. Two loop style Butterfly doesn’t generally hang down past the horse’s mouth as the Liverpool may. Many people do not like using a Butterfly bit with a vehicle with straight shafts, as the loop may get caught on the shaft if the horse turns his head. The mini bit Butterfly cheeks are scaled down enough that this is less likely, but the horse bit cheeks are generally a larger loop. For this reason, we don’t stock Butterfly bits in Horse sizes. Here are some typical mouthpieces:

	Mullen Butterfly	Mouthpiece arches forward; Snaffle setting - pressure to lips; Curb setting – mouthpiece rotates into tongue.	Mild in snaffle setting; Curb setting not as good for horses who don’t like tongue pressure.
	Arch Butterfly	Mouthpiece arches up; Allows more room for the tongue in both the snaffle and curb settings.	Doesn’t rotate into the horse’s tongue on the curb setting. Encourages roundness.
	Port Butterfly	Allows the tongue to fill the port; can make it harder for the horse to lift it off the bars; can bump a low palate.	A higher port may act on the palate, encouraging the horse to drop his head.
	Conrad Butterfly	Allows much room for the tongue; can bump a low palate.	Thick mouthed horses seem to like this bit. See note about port above. Encourages straightness.
	French Link Butterfly	Snaffle – does not squeeze tongue as much as the Single Jointed Butterfly Curb – can affect every pressure point, but less likely to affect palate.	Strong action in curb setting. Good bit for those drivers who want a traditional driving cheek, but only use the snaffle rein.


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2025 Spokes and Spurs Calendar

Aug. 29-31	Suzy Stafford Clinic	Charlotte's Creek Farm, Georgetown
Sept. 5-7	Villa Louis Carriage Classic	Prairie du Chien, WI
Oct. 7-12	National Drive Fall Drive	Hoosier Horse Park, Edinburg, IN
Oct. 17-19	Nashoba Carriage Classic	Germantown, TN
Oct. 24-26	Halloween at the Haven - DT & CT	Valkyrie's Haven
Dec. TBD	Annual Spokes & Spurs Meeting	TBD

Spokes and Spurs Library

Spokes and Spurs has a nice little library available to our members. Let Ann Katona know if you would like to check-out anything.

*American Carriages, Sleighs, Sulkies and Carts 168 Illustrations from Victorian Sources! Edited by Don H. Berkebile

*American Horse-Drawn Vehicles - Being a collection of 218 pictures... Jack D. Rittenhouse

*Bending the Driving Horse Muffy Seaton

*Breaking a Horse to Harness - A Step by Step Guide Sallie Walrond

*Bristol Wagon & Carriage Illustrated Catalog, 1900 Bristol Wagon & Carriage Works Co. Ltd.

*Carriage Driving - A Logical Approach Through Dressage Training Heike Bean and Sarah Blanchard

*Discovering Horse Drawn Carriages D. J. Smith

*Driven Dressage with the Single Horse Sandy Rabinowitz

*Driver Proficiency Program - Level I and Road Driving Syllabus The Carriage Association of America

*Driving a Harness Horse - A Step by Step Guide (A sequel to Breaking a Horse to Harness) Sallie Walrond

*Driving for Pleasure or The Harness Stable and its Appointments Francis T. Underhill

*The Encyclopedia of Driving Sallie Walrond

*The Essential Guide to Carriage Driving Robyn Cuffey and Jaye-Allison Winkel

*Fundamentals of Private Driving Sallie Walrond

*Horse-Drawn Vehicles at the Shelburne Museum Kenneth Edward Wheeling

*Illustrated Catalogue of Carriages and Special Business Advertiser / G. & D. Cook & Co.'s Forward by Paul H. Downing

*Walnut Hill: A Grand Celebration of the Horse & Carriage Robert Lannazzi; Photographer. Bill Remley; Commentator

****Spokes and Spurs members may post FREE classified ads in the Spokes and Spurs Newsletter.***

Send ads to dunhorse1220@gmail.com.