



Many natural horsemanship clinicians and trainers recommend using a snaffle bit to help teach a horse **and human** proper “feel.” The snaffle is often paired with mecate reins and slobber straps to obtain the lightness that a skilled horseman seeks in their horse and themselves.

The following excerpt from an article in Western Horseman magazine gives some great insight as to why you would want to use this type of rein set-up for your horse.

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What is the purpose of slobber straps? They are designed to add weight and “feeling” to the bit, which in turn allows for a clear communication, feel and release in training. For young horses or those working heavily on softening exercises, slobber straps allow the horse to realize a change or transition is coming. Then the horse can start to process it and clearly feel the rewarded release with the leather pieces hanging straight down.

A Weaver Leather crew recently asked a number of employees and endorsees why they love using slobber straps in their training and here is the consensus.

Rope Reins: *Slobber straps attach to yacht rope reins very easily! Rope reins are wonderful. The one piece design is easy to manage, feels great in your hands, adds weight and “feel” to the bit and you don’t lose them when riding. What more is there to say? A rider can develop great communication and timing with a horse, knowing what you want to ask and when to release.*



Ranching: *Slobber straps are easily set up with a mecate. The slobber straps help protect these reins from excessive wear. Mecate reins are a very traditional ranching piece. In a day’s work a horse will drink out of many creeks and what better way to save a set of expensive reins than add some leather! The benefits of a properly tied mecate setup are huge, too. A mecate can act as an extra lead attached to your rein, and tied properly, it does not apply pressure to the bit. You can safely tie up your horse, step off and let it act as a lead rope while doctoring or processing a newborn calf, help direct a colt over a log or simply as a backup option in the very scenario you unintentionally come off a horse and stand a chance of avoiding a long walk home!*

Snaffle Bit: Slobber straps are most commonly attached to a snaffle bit, although they can be used on a leverage bit. Who doesn't love a snaffle? Snaffle bits are very popular as the foundation to softening exercises and teaching a horse to follow its nose! It does not matter if you have a top-notch cutting horse or solid trail horse; they need the basics of a snaffle before transitioning to anything else.

Beginner Riders: Because they allow the horse time to process a change coming, slobber straps are great for someone new to riding. The "grace" of the slobber strap allows a trained horse to have a chance to figure out a less experienced rider and prevents or "forgives" accidental or improper cues from nervous or quick hands, while saving the horse's mouth. Again, it exaggerates a release. This is how horses learn pressure and release. When asking a horse for a response, one applies pressure. When the horse responds to the questions asked, the pressure is released, rewarding the horse for the correct answer. Horses learn so quickly with this method!

There you have it! A few reasons why many trainers in the industry reach for a bridle setup with slobber straps when they head to their tack room. It is important to remember that each rider and horse are different, and one must find a feel that works best for them, the horse and what type of training is trying to be accomplished. Also remember, never be afraid to try something new!

Article provided as an educational reference by the Northwest Natural Horsemanship Center
Fall City, Washington