



First USMMA Clinic Held

Last May, the United States Mangalarga Marchador Association sponsored two Montana clinics, which focused on the Brazilian inspection process and standards for the breed: conformation, gait, and temperament. Only horses that meet these standards are allowed to breed. Brazilian Inspector Dr. Getulio Tadeu Vieira of the ABCMM, the Brazilian Registry of the Mangalarga Marchador horse, officiated.

If United States-born Marchadors pass the examination, they're then marked with the ABCMM Marchador brand, a horseshoe with an M in the middle. This is the official mark of the ABCMM, trademarked in Brazil and the United States. The Marchador horses can then be dual registered with the ABCMM. For more information, visit <http://usmarchador.com>.

Mangalarga Marchador breeding prospects (right) are inspected for conformation, gait, and temperament. If they pass, they receive a brand (above).



The TWHBEA has added two new membership levels to attract new members.

TWHBEA Adds Membership Levels

The Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors' Association is offering two new membership levels: an introductory membership (\$35 per year) and an associate membership (\$45 per year). Both membership levels will include the official breed journal (*Voice of the Tennessee Walking Horse*), access to all TWHBEA programs, and the ability to conduct business at member rates. Neither level will include free foal registration/transfer (offered to full adult members) or voting privileges. The introductory membership is limited to one year and to new, first-time members. For more information, call (931) 359-1574, or visit www.twhbea.com.

Icelandic Horse breeder Katrin Sheehan has selected environmentally friendly fencing for her 245-acre Creekside Farm.

Icelandic Farm Goes Green

Leading breeder Katrin Sheehan has selected environmentally friendly fencing for her 245-acre Creekside Farm, a world-class Icelandic Horse farm in Rutledge, Ga. Sheehan is the breeding chairman for the United States Icelandic Horse Congress (www.icelandics.org). She chose LifeTime Lumber for her pastures, paddocks, and riding arenas.

Manufactured by LifeTime Composites LLC, the lumber is a durable, sustainable, low-maintenance fencing material containing up to 65 percent post-consumer material composed of recycled fly ash, a byproduct from electric utility plants. This lumber conforms to the recycled-content criteria under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System, LEED (www.usgbc.org/LEED) is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings. For more information on LifeTime Lumber, call (760) 634-6860, or visit www.ltlumber.com.



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'Gaited Horse' Bits

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A The short answer is, "It doesn't." There's no way to use a curb strap with a snaffle bit, because a snaffle has no shanks and creates no leverage (Photo 8). What you can do is add a chin strap to a snaffle bit (Photo 9). When added to a snaffle bit, a chin strap can keep the snaffle from being pulled all the way through the horse's mouth.

Q My horse is almost 2 years old and very talented. He has great gaits in the pasture. I've been riding him for two months and he's never backed. But he isn't gaiting right, and I think it's because I'm riding him in a snaffle for direct contact, and he needs a curb to collect up and gait correctly. What kind of curb is best for collecting up a horse? I know he isn't ready for a show-ring kind of curb, but he doesn't respect the snaffle.

I rode my horse in a short-shanked curb to see what he'd do. He arched his neck nicely, but a friend said my horse was arching his neck too much (his chin was on his chest). Is that bad? Should I look for something about halting between that and a show curb?

A If your horse gaits well in pasture, the natural gaits are there waiting for you. If you can be a little more patient, you can have those gaits under saddle. Right now, your horse is very young; in fact, he's far too young to be working under saddle. At age 2, he's still a baby, still teething, and still growing in all directions. A 2-year-old will have a hard time balancing himself well, because his body is changing every day. He's several years away from being physically mature, and collection is a long way away.

When horses don't respond to bits, it's not due to a "lack of respect," but a lack of training. Horses aren't born knowing how bits work or what their riders expect from them. You need to teach your horse to understand what you're asking, teach him how to respond in the way you want, and then teach him to make that response a habit. All of this takes time and patience.

A horse with his chin on his chest can't move comfortably or see where he's going, and that's not a very safe way to go down the trail. Your horse is in kindergarten; let

him learn about tack and riding before you tackle the trails.

Meanwhile, do your horse's basic training in a comfortable snaffle, not a curb of any kind. You can change to a curb later in his education, but he's not ready yet. If you begin escalating bits now, it's likely that by the time he's more mature and physically able to gait well under a rider, he may've learned to hate the whole idea of being ridden. There's no reason to allow that to happen.

Q I'm having problems getting my 10-year-old Tennessee Walking Horse to gait correctly. At first, I ride him in the show-horse curb with 10 long shanks and kept the reins pretty loose. Then I took him on the trail. He's very surefooted and loves being outside. (If I he hated the show ring.) I want to ride in a snaffle; my no-pinch mullen-mouth fits fine, and he seems to like it. But I have to hold the reins tightly to get him to flex, and he ends up racking instead of performing the running walk. Do I have to use a curb to get the running walk back?

A You've already answered your own question. A good running walk involves a lot of nodding, and if the reins are short and tight, your horse can't nod. When a Walker can't nod, he'll naturally tend to shift into a rack, because racking doesn't require nodding.

You can get the running walk in a snaffle bit, just allow your horse the same head-and-neck freedom that you gave him when you rode him in the curb, on a loose rein. Don't worry about flexion; if he's moving actively forward with unrestricted head movement, he'll flex as much as he needs to. When you ask for a lot of flexion, you put too much tension on the reins, and once again, that's a quick way to turn a running walk into a rack. Your snaffle is a good choice.

Jessica Jahiel, PhD (www.jessicajahiel.com), is an internationally recognized clinician and lecturer, and an award-winning author of books on horses, riding, and training. Her e-mail newsletter (www.horse-sense.org) is a popular worldwide resource.



For more bit Q&As, and a bit/bride resource guide, visit www.myhorse.com/trailrider.

GO Gaited!