

USE OF AUXILIARY REINS UNDER SADDLE

[See also *USDF Lungeing Manual*]

Standing Martingale

This equipment has one side rein leading from the girth between the horse's front legs to the horse's head, where it is attached to the chinstrap of the noseband. Its length is adjusted so that the horse's mouth is in a horizontal line with his hip bones.

There are very few cases where the use of a standing martingale is necessary or even advisable. Compared with side reins, the standing martingale offers more sideways freedom for the horse's head and neck. But its disadvantages are that it is very restrictive and that the under-neck muscles are worked more and therefore developed, which is not desirable. The standing martingale thus has a limited value.

Running Martingale

This equipment should not be used to tie a horse's head down, but if a horse carries his head unusually high or throws it up, it can be of value. If, for instance, when approaching a fence, a horse suddenly throws up its head and tries to evade the aids, the running martingale will help the rider to stay in control and will also protect him from being hit in the face by the horse's head.

“With the running martingale correctly adjusted, when the horse's head is carried normally, the rein forms a straight, unbroken line from the rider's hand to the horse's mouth. Like the standing martingale, if the running martingale is too short, its action has a negative effect in that it causes the horse to resist the constant downward pressure on in so-doing, to develop the muscles on the underside of the neck.” [*Principles of Riding*, pp 82-83]

Running Reins

“Double side-reins (also know as running reins) are used primarily for lungeing and they are better attached to a lungeing roller than to a saddle. When used on the latter they should be attached to the ‘D’s’ just below the pommel. They should run through the bit rings, from the inside to the outside, and back to the girth, where they are attached in about the same position as single side-reins.” [*Principles of Riding*, p. 32]

Draw Reins

“When using draw reins one must be careful to obey the following rule: the draw reins do not have the job of pulling the horse's head down. Of far better use and of much greater importance is the fact that the draw reins offer the horse a boundary upwards and forward beyond which he may not go, especially those horses that have a tendency to push the head and nose too high and too far forward. When used in this way, the draw reins will give the horse support in finding the bit and allowing him to reach forward to it. When the horse then achieves the desired carriage, he should no longer feel the draw reins when they are correctly applied.

Anyone who tries to pull a horse into the desired frame with draw reins will soon find that the horse will draw his neck back too much and become too tight in his neck. Should one ride for too long in this way, it is very easy to develop a false flexion or broken neck. The rider must therefore always check and prove that the draw reins are not overused or abused. One should be especially careful that the draw rein is not over-shortened when one is shortening the snaffle rein.

Draw reins have great use when a horse leans against the reins and will simply not ‘give’ in his neck. It is very easy for the weaker rider, with a horse that goes against the hand, to become too hard with his hands and eventually saw with them. It is then very easy for problems with the tongue to occur and these are very hard to resolve. With a “feeling” use of the draw reins, a difficult horse can be shown the way to round himself and therefore to relax the muscles of his neck and back.

In advanced dressage work, it can also be that the horse will resent the collected work and make himself extremely strong and therefore not work through his back. One must however be careful that the collection occurs through the use of the pushing back and legs and the maintenance or holding against the horse with the snaffle rein and not the draw rein. The draw rein only has the job of preventing too strong a resistance in the horse. With collected work, draw reins belong only in the hands of an experienced rider.” [*The Dressage Horse*, pp 166-167]