

# Natural Hoof

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## Natural Hoof Bitless Bridles

Natural Hoof bitless bridles provide the control you need without the potential for harm to the horse (when fitted and used correctly).

Natural Hoof has commissioned New Zealand's top bridle makers to make our bitless bridles to our specifications, based on years of research, experience and personal use. These bridles are designed and/or approved by Natural Hoof for superior safety and durability, and superbly crafted from the best materials. The Natural Hoof bitless bridles look very smart, are long lasting and very humane and comfortable for your horse, resulting in better control and performance.



These bridles have been proven time and again to increase performance and eliminate 'vices' - even for horses with severe problems, including head tossing, rearing, bolting, and being uncontrollable in gags and other severe bits. The bitless bridle is currently being used with greater success than other bridles in extreme equestrian sports in New Zealand and overseas, such as hunting, cross-country, showjumping, endurance, driving, trekking etc.

This success is due to the unique whole-head action of the bitless bridle and the fact that a horse will perform better without the pain of the bit in its mouth - one of the horse's most sensitive areas consisting of mucus membranes covering nerves and the jawbone. Latest scientific research by US vet Dr Robert Cook shows that even if the bit is used correctly, the presence of any bit will cause damage, such as bone spurs on the jaw and nerve damage. Unlike traditional bitless bridles such as hackamores, bosals, rope halters and sidepulls, the bitless bridle is an entirely painless method of communication.



***The Bitless Bridle - a safer alternative.*** Even used correctly, bitted or traditional bitless bridles are designed to control the horse through pain, which can cause the horse to resist and even panic, especially if the horse is already upset or spooked. Eliminating the pain by using a cross-over bitless bridle reduces resistance, so that even in extreme situations, the horse is better able to concentrate on the aids given at that

time. In our experience, even the performance of problem horses is greatly improved using the Natural Hoof bitless bridles. The unique action of the bitless bridle provides maximum control for stopping and steering.

**How Does The Bitless Bridle Work?** The cross-over bitless bridle works on a simple pressure and release system. Retraining time is minimal, as it is just an extension of the ground work and halter training we do with our horses from a young age - asking them to move off or give to pressure. For example, to steer your horse, light tension on one rein distributes even lighter pressure on the whole of the opposite half of the head, from poll to chin and across the bridge of the nose. To stop a horse, pressure on both reins activates a whole-head-hug.

### **Fitting the Bitless Bridle**

The bridle fits like a normal bridle, except with the chin straps crossing over each other behind the horse's head. The nose piece should sit no higher than two finger's width below the horse's cheek bones and 2-3 fingers above the corners of the mouth - ensuring it is not sitting on the soft cartilage of the horse's nose. The noseband does not need to be tight as this has no effect other than to make the bridle uncomfortable for the horse - you should be able to slip one or two fingers underneath just as you would fit a cavesson. Natural Hoof can have a browband or complete bridle made to measure if necessary. See below for measuring instructions.

### **When you first use the bitless bridle:**

Please be aware that although the bitless bridle may feel like a normal bridle for the rider, it is a completely different feel for the horse and will take a few rides for the horse to adjust to the new 'feel', depending on the horse's current level of training. Therefore, it is advisable to use the bitless bridle for the first few rides in a safe enclosed area, making lots of turns and stops so that your horse can adjust to the new feel of the bridle.

### **Trouble shooting: -**

- If the bridle sits too close to the horse's eye, the browband is too small.
- If the cross-over straps are too long or not long enough, it is likely that the cheek pieces are not the correct length.
- **The horse tosses its head or shows discomfort**, check that the bridle is fitted correctly according to the fitting instructions above, ie; not too close to the eye, noseband not too tight, etc. If fitted correctly, the horse it may just be confused at the new feel of the bridle. It is recommended that you do lots of transitions and turns at a slow pace until the horse adjusts.
- **The horse is still not happy even after several weeks of riding in the bitless bridle.** This may indicate severe nerve damage, other kinds of damage or psychological problems from previous use of the bit. In this case, it may take some time riding bitless for the nerves to be able to repair and performance to improve, and some professional retraining may be helpful or necessary.
- **Refusing the bridle, 'poor manners'.** If the horse has had previous problems with a bitted bridle due to pain from the bit or poor starting/previous abuse, it may have poor association with being bridled or having a bridle on its head altogether. It will take quite a few rides for the horse to realise that there is no longer any pain associated with the bridle. You can undo the cheek strap and put the bridle on like a halter until the horse adjusts and in extreme cases, seek professional help.
- **Horse opens its mouth to accept the bit when being bridled or unbridled.** This is common for the first few times the bitless bridle is used, especially for experienced (or just helpful) horses and the horse quickly adjusts when ridden regularly in the bitless bridle.

**Cheek pieces bunching or cross over straps not releasing when rein pressure applied or hair under noseband is 'ruffled' after a ride.** The horse is likely in the habit of 'pulling' or resisting the bit, with or without the rider noticing. After some time in the bitless bridle, the horse will resist less as there is no pain involved, the aids will lighten, communication will increase and these problems will disappear.

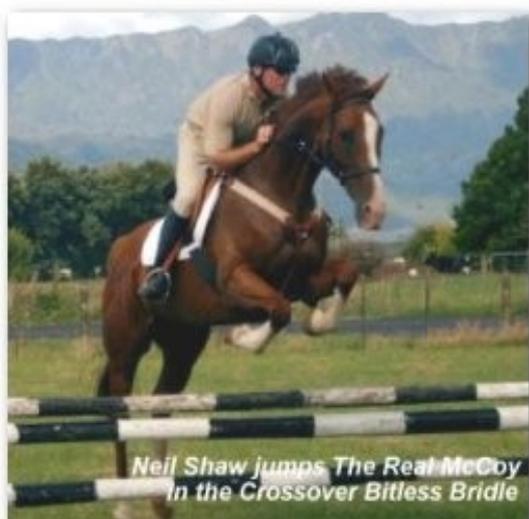
## Measuring your horse's head for the Bitless Bridle:

It is recommended that you measure the horse's head before purchasing the bridle to ensure that the bitless bridle will fit correctly. If the bitless bridle does not fit correctly, or your measurements fall outside those given below, Natural Hoof can have a bridle made to measure, which usually takes between 1-2 weeks and costs \$20 extra.

Made to measure bridles are non-returnable and any alterations necessary due to incorrect measurements may incur an extra charge, so please make sure your measurements are correct. To measure your horse's head, you will need a flexible measuring tape to take the following three measurements:



1. **Noseband:** run the measuring tape around your horse's nose where a cavesson would normally sit, ie no higher than two finger-widths below the horse's cheek bones and 2-3 finger-widths above the corners of the mouth - ensuring the noseband lies no lower than the soft cartilage of the horse's nose.
2. **Cheek and headpiece:** A single measurement from where your noseband would sit at the side of the horse's head, run the measuring tape over the poll and down to the where the noseband sits on the other side of the horse's head.
3. **Browband:** From where your cheekpiece measurement would sit above the eye, measure across the horse's brow, making provisions for the loops of the browband. If you have difficulty with this measurement, you can measure the browband of another bridle that you know fits correctly, remembering to measure the *entire* browband length - including the loops.



Neil Shaw jumps The Real McCoy  
in the Crossover Bitless Bridle

### Natural Hoof Bridle Sizes:

We have two standard sizes in stock and they can be adjusted to fit a wide range of horse head sizes. (NoBit Arab size also in stock). The measurements are:

#### HACK:

- **Noseband:** minimum: 58cm, max: 67cm
- **Cheek and headpieces** (from noseband over poll and back to noseband): min: 95cm, max: 118cm
- **Browband:** 40cm (including loops).

#### PONY:

- **Noseband:** minimum: 47cm, max: 58cm
- **Cheek and headpieces** (from noseband over poll and back to noseband): min: 78cm, max: 101cm
- **Browband:** 36cm. (including loops).

**NoBit Bridles also available in the following sizes and colours upon request: Mini/shetland, or cob; red, navy blue, sky blue, forest green, purple and white.**

**Natural Hoof Bridles and accessories:** *NB:All Bridles have stainless steel fittings.*

● **Natural Hoof Synthetic Bitless Bridle:**

These economic bitless bridles are made of tough, long lasting 3/4 inch (19mm) leather-look material with stainless steel fittings. The synthetic webbing material is made in Australia for extreme heat and cold tolerance and has a UVH factor, so it will not crack like NZ webbing, and with proper care should last as long as any good English leather bridle. To clean, simply wash in warm soapy water. Available in black and brown.

● **NoBit Bridles: Apollo material (pictured right):**

Beautifully made bridles in the same style as the Natural Hoof cross-over bridles, the best mid-range bridle we found on the market. A really stunning bridle that looks outstanding and lasts for years. The super-advanced Apollo material is approximately *20 times stronger than leather*, yet still soft and flexible to the touch. Available in black or brown and pony, hack or Arabian sizes.



● **Natural Hoof English Leather Bitless Bridles:**

Using the very best 3/4 inch (19mm) English leather, these stunning bridles are hand stitched, with a specially designed reinforced noseband for extra strength and safety.

You will not find a nicer looking or safer leather bitless bridle on the market. Available in black or brown.



● **English Leather Reins:**

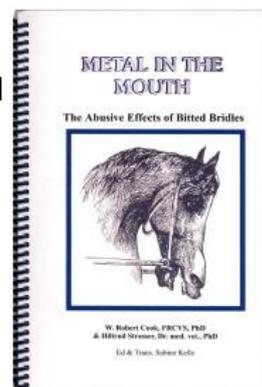
Beautifully crafted leather reins designed to match our English Leather Bridles. These reins are hand stitched for extra strength and safety. Available in black or brown.

● **Reassurance Reins:**

Leather reins covered with non-slip girth guard material for extra safety. These stylish looking reins are an excellent compliment to all Natural Hoof bridles.

● **Metal in the Mouth - the Abusive Effects of Bitted Bridles**

By W. Robert Cook, FRCVS, PhD & Hiltrud Strasser, Dr. med. vet., PhD 144 pages, incl. color images. This book describes and scientifically documents the multitude of effects of the bit in the horse's mouth. These effects - still widely unknown among horse riders and owners, range from pain to respiratory and digestive problems, nerve damage, bone spurs, and reduced performance and longevity. A must-read for every horse owner who uses a bit or is interested in riding bitless.



**For additional information about the Natural Hoof bitless bridles, or an up to date price list of all Natural Hoof products, please contact:**