



# NRHA Equipment Reference Guide for Event Officials

# Intended Purpose of the NRHA Equipment Reference Guide

- This document is to be used as a supplemental resource in conjunction with the NRHA Handbook.
- For the most up-to-date rules and regulations please visit the digital NRHA Handbook on [nrha.com](http://nrha.com).
- NRHA members are encouraged to ask an Equipment Judge or Steward if they have questions regarding the legality of a piece of equipment while participating at NRHA events.

## Accoutrement Rule

- In any approved class, the judge shall have the authority to require the removal or alteration of any piece of equipment or accoutrement which is unsafe, or in his/her opinion, would tend to give a horse an unfair advantage or which he/she believes to be inhumane

*2026 NRHA Handbook pg. 84, section (j)*

# Legal Curb Straps & Curb Chains



# Legal Curb Strap or Chain Specifications

- When a curb bit is used, a curb strap or curb chain is required, which must be at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in width, lie flat against the jaw, and be free of barbs, wire, and/or twist

*NRHA Handbook pg. 83, section (e)*



Legal







# Illegal Curb Straps





Illegal



Illegal



**Illegal – too narrow**





**Illegal – does not lay flat**



**Illegal – does not lay flat**





**Illegal – because of curb  
chain**



## Illegal – Wish Bone curb



**Illegal – when used on a  
snaffle bit**

# Legal Rein & Headstall Attachments

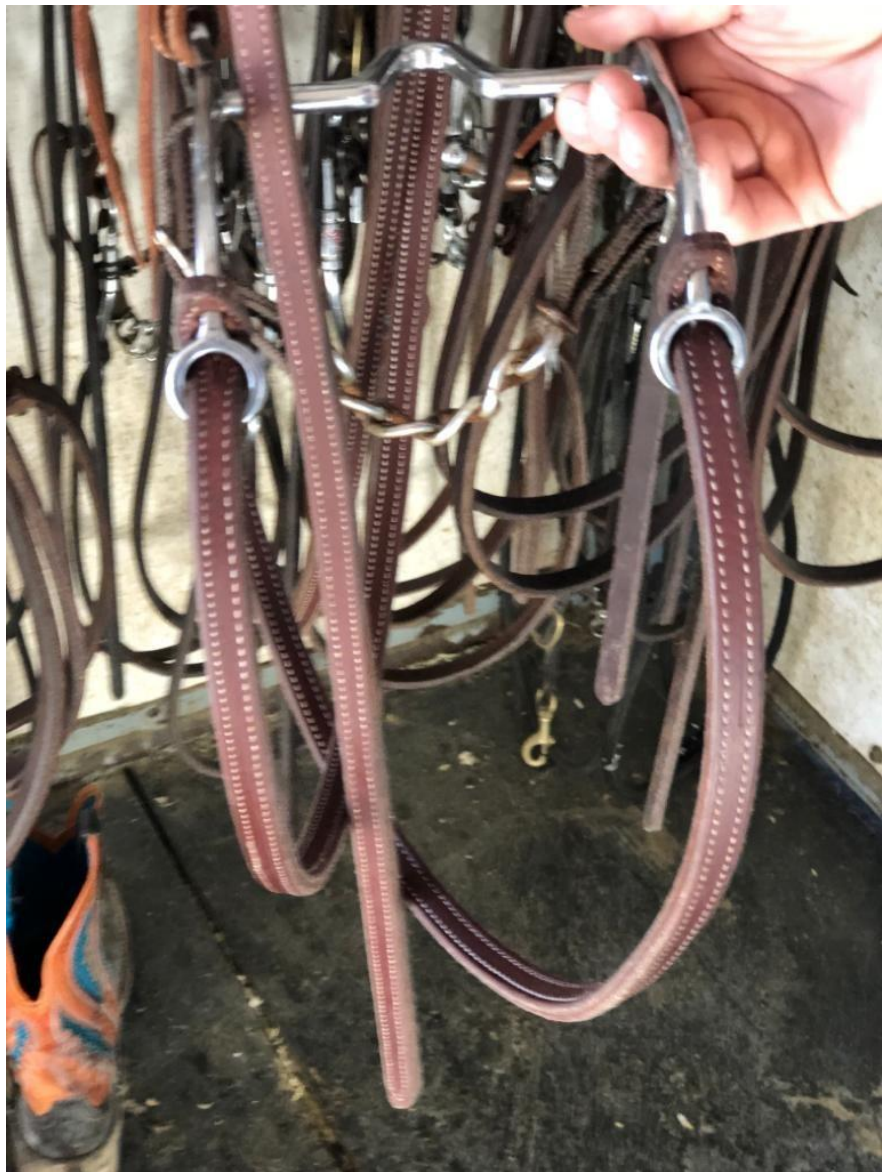




**Legal – reins must have a single point of attachment.**



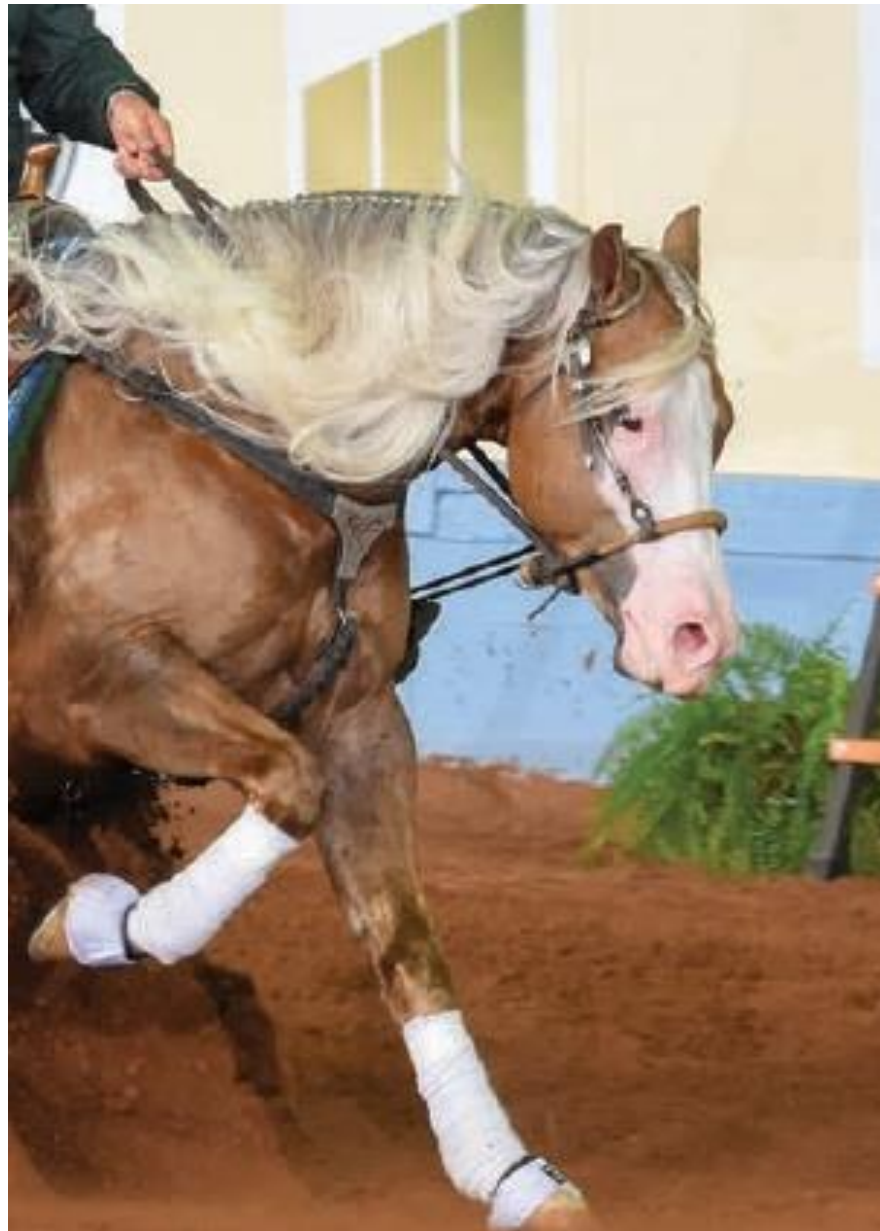


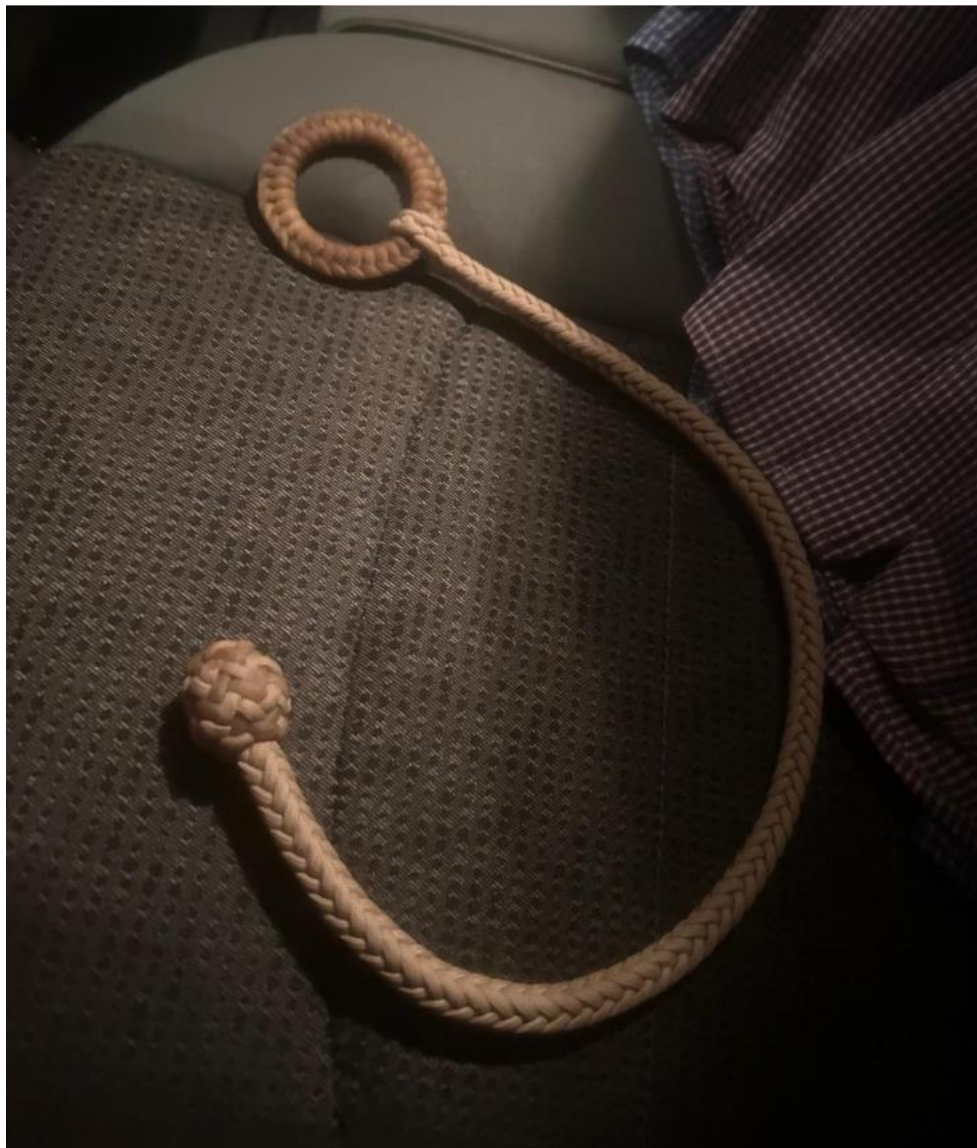




Legal

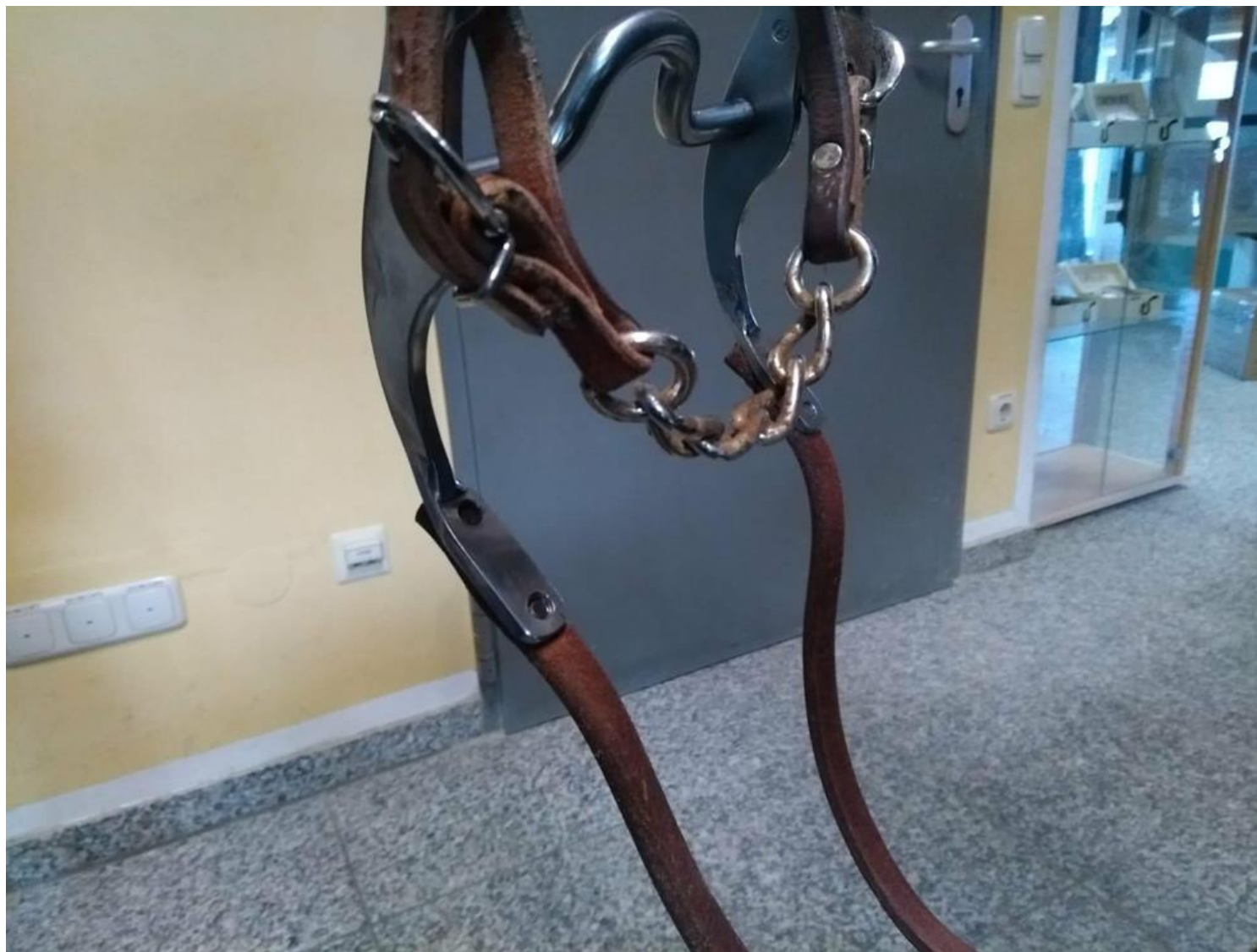


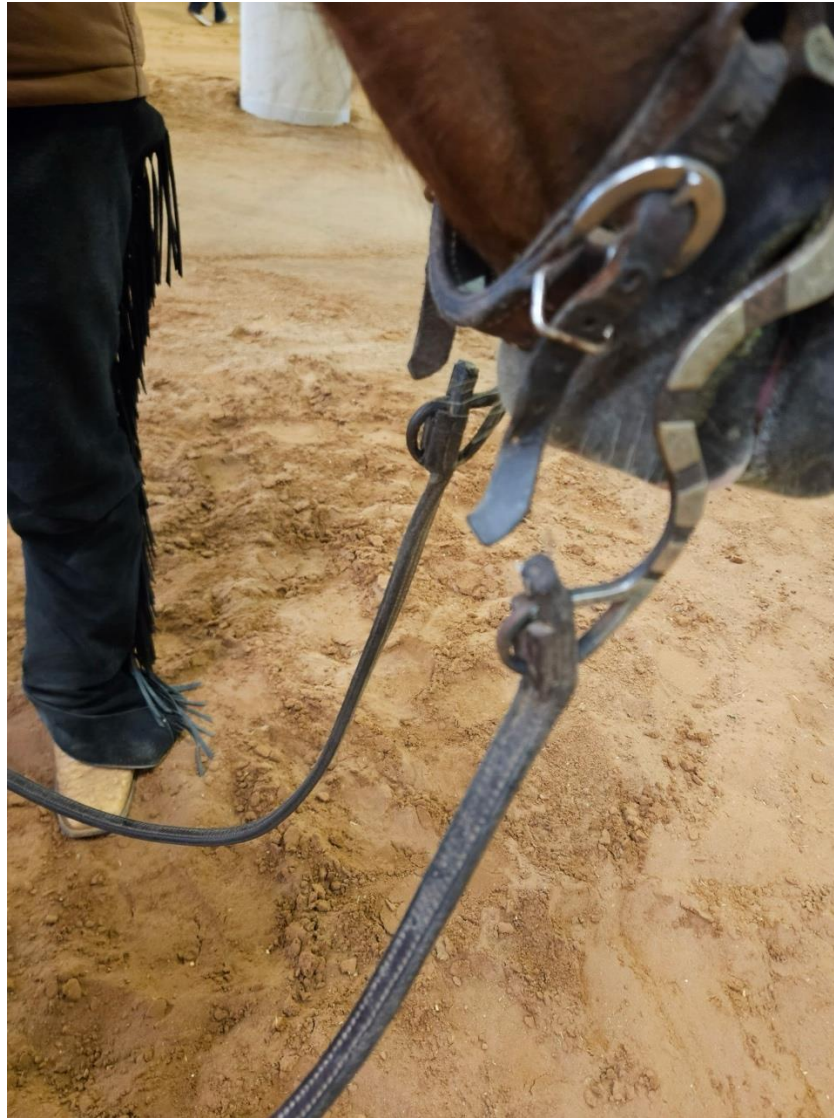




# Illegal Rein & Headstall Attachments







**Illegal – reins must have a single point of attachment**









**Illegal – Headstall attachment**



## Illegal – Headstall Attachment







**Illegal – Hackamores shall be round in shape and constructed of uniform braided rawhide or leather.**



# Legal Snaffle Bits



# Legal Snaffle Bit Specifications

- References to snaffle bits mean conventional O-ring, egg-butt, or D-ring with a ring no larger than 4" and no smaller than 2".
- The inside circumference of the ring must be free of rein, curb or headstall attachments which would provide leverage.
- The mouthpiece should be round, oval or egg-shaped, smooth and free of wire. It may be inlaid, but smooth and/or latex wrapped.
- The bars must be a minimum of  $\frac{5}{16}$ " in diameter, measured 1" in from the cheek with a gradual decrease to center of the snaffle.
- Optional curb strap is acceptable however curb chains are not acceptable.
- These requirements remain the same for all classes in which a rider may use a snaffle bit.









## Legal – Rubber/Latex Wrapped Snaffle

# Illegal Snaffle Bits





**Illegal – Bicycle Chain**



**Illegal – Dr. Bristol Bit**



**Illegal – Mule Bit**



**Illegal Twist but rings are within legal dimensions**



**Illegal – Mouth piece too narrow**



**Illegal – Double-Jointed Snaffle**



**Illegal – Twisted Wire**







**Illegal – Snaffle cannot be wrapped  
with vet wrap**



**Illegal – Snaffle cannot be wrapped with leather (only latex wrapped is allowed)**







**Illegal- Piece on ring catches on bit ornamentation**

# Legal Curb Bits



# Legal Curb Bit Specifications

- References to a bit means the use of a curb bit that has a solid or broken mouthpiece, has shanks and acts with leverage. All curb bits must be free of mechanical device and should be considered a standard western bit. A standard western bit includes:
- 8 ½" maximum length shank to be measured as indicated in the judge's guide. Shanks may be fixed or loose.
- Concerning mouthpieces, bars must be round, oval or egg-shaped, smooth and free of wire of  $\frac{5}{16}$ " to  $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter, measured 1" from the cheek. They may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped. Nothing may protrude more than  $\frac{1}{8}$ " below the mouthpiece (bar).
- The port must be no higher than 3 ½" maximum, with rollers and covers acceptable. Broken mouthpieces, half-breeds, and spades are standard. Spade bits may have wire wrapped spacer bars.
- Slip or gag bits, donuts or flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable.
- A standard western bit has only one point of pull.









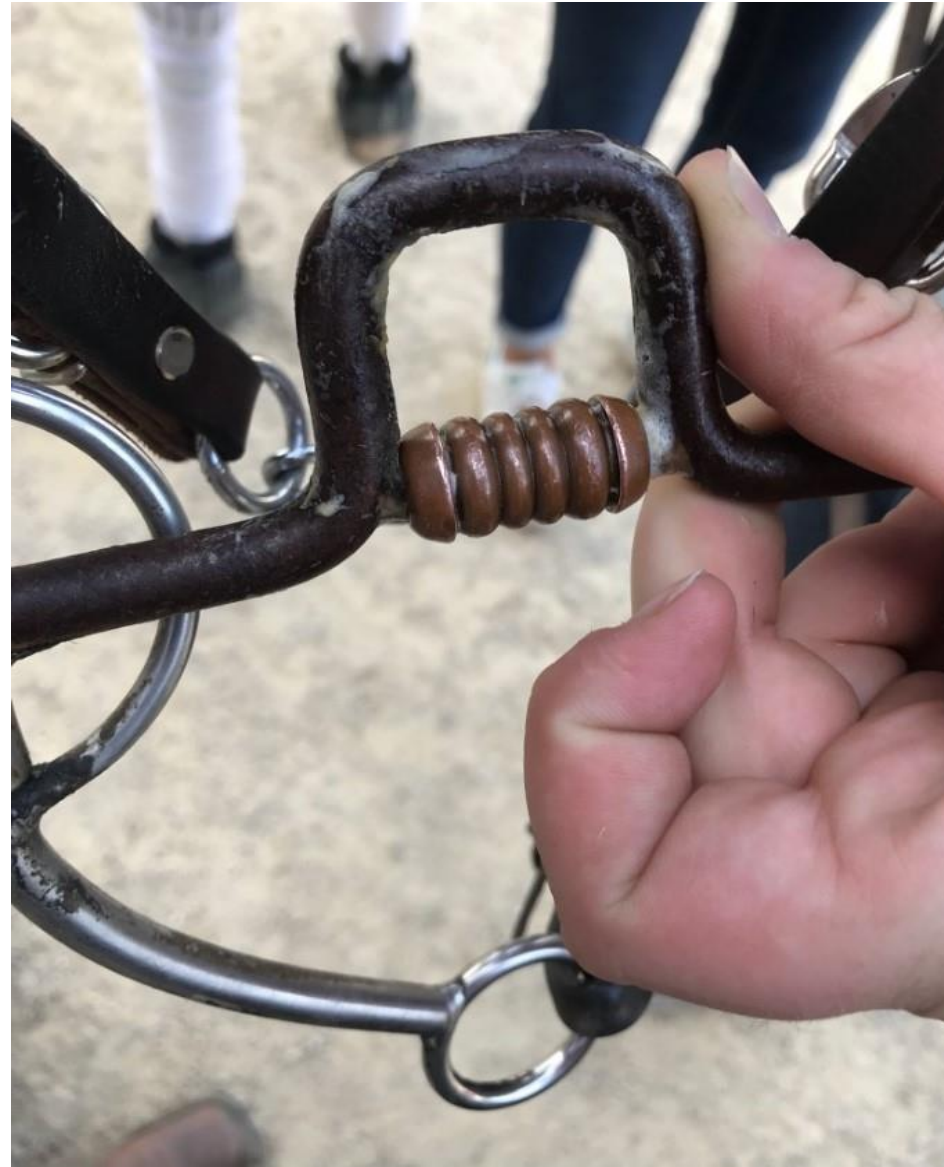
**Legal – Dr. Bristol Bit**

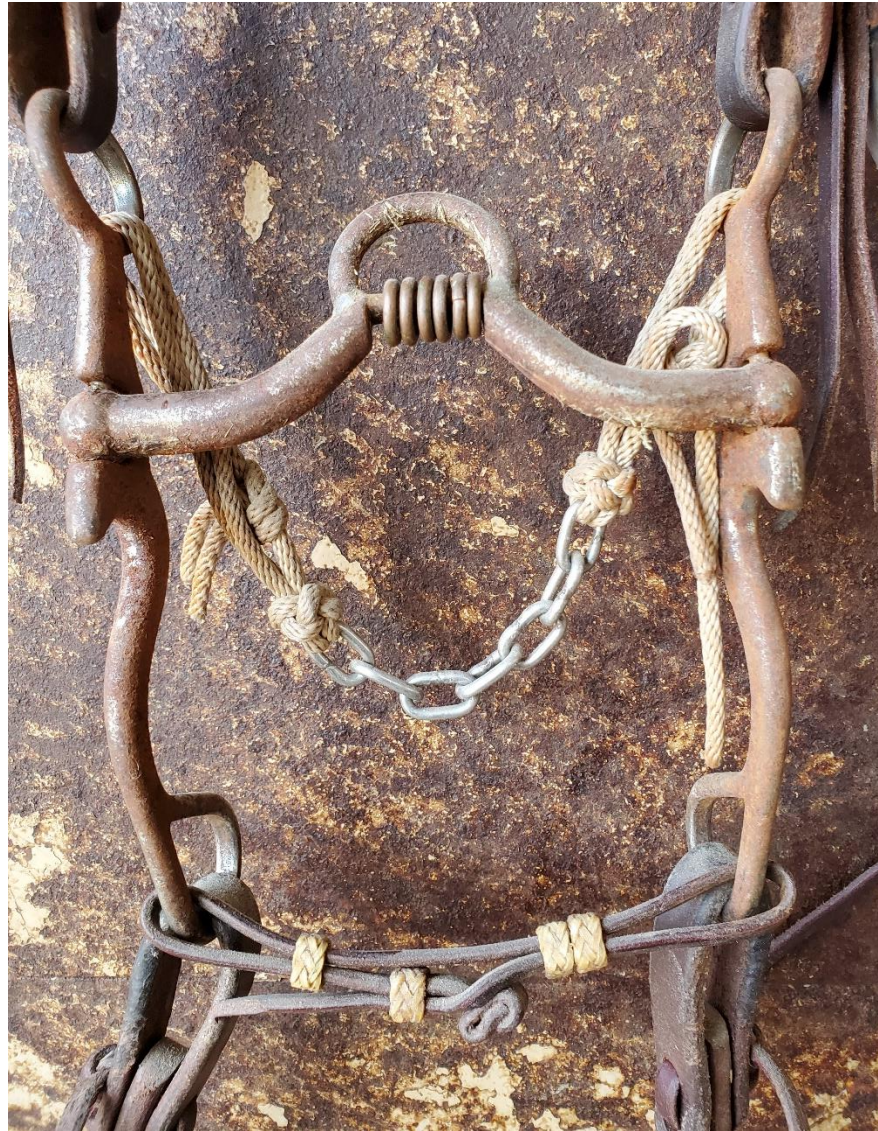






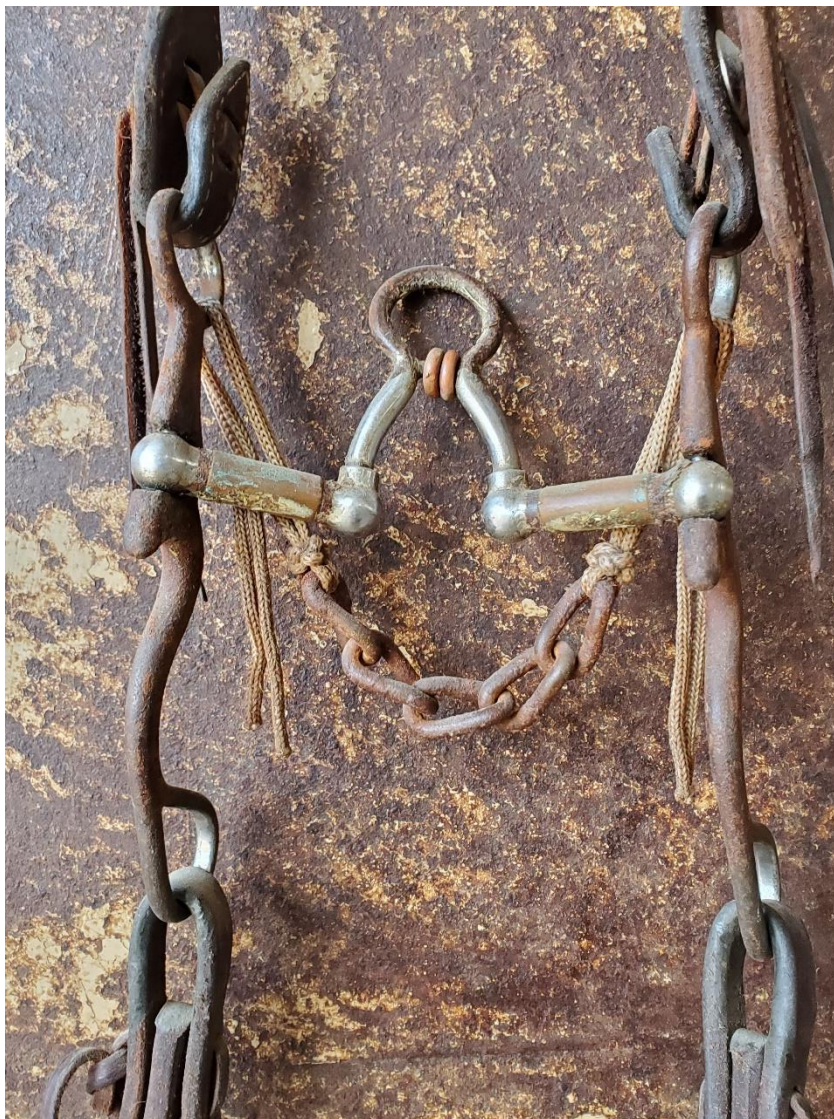






## Legal Bit with Illegal Curb Chain



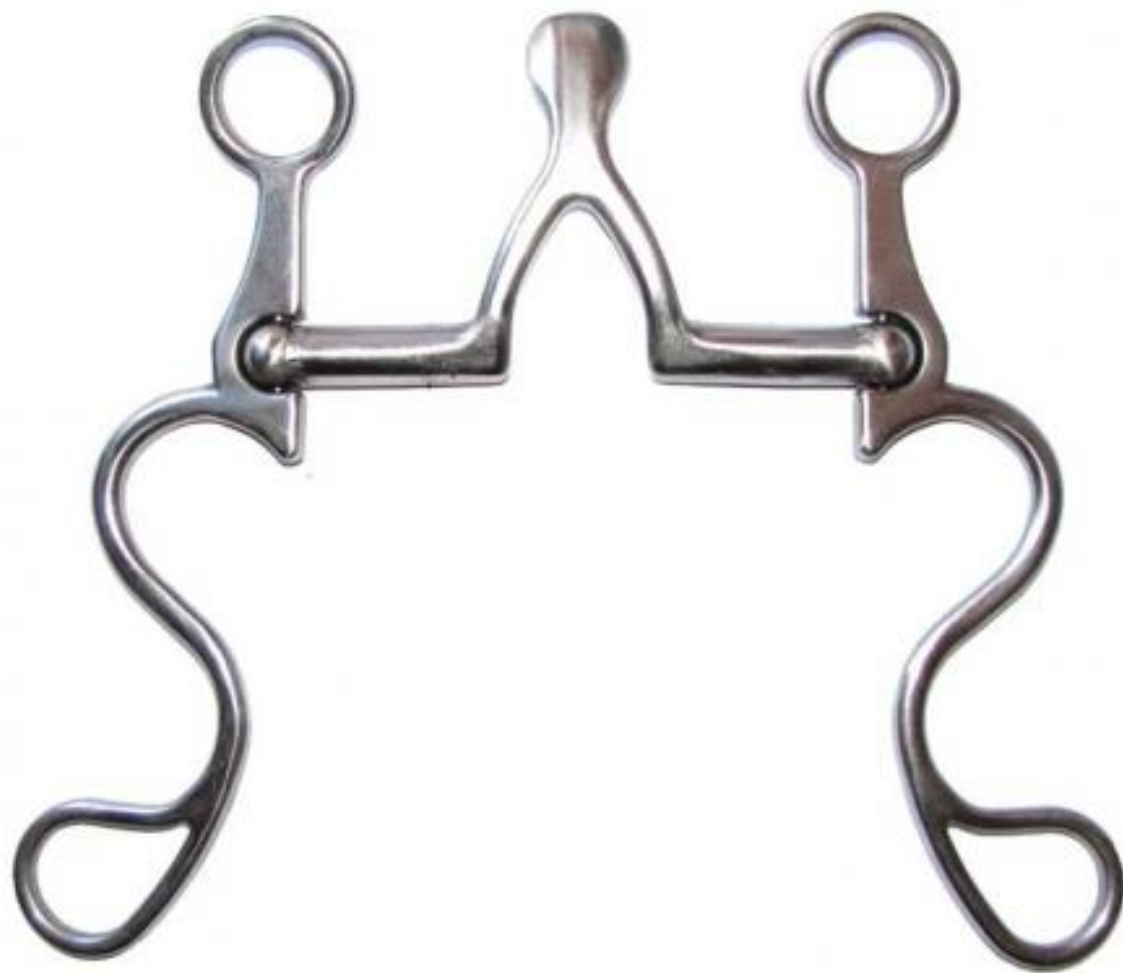


## Legal Bit with Illegal Curb Chain











**Legal – if the top corners of the port are not altered or worn to become sharp.**

**Would become illegal if it has sharp points.**



Legal – “Ace of Spades”

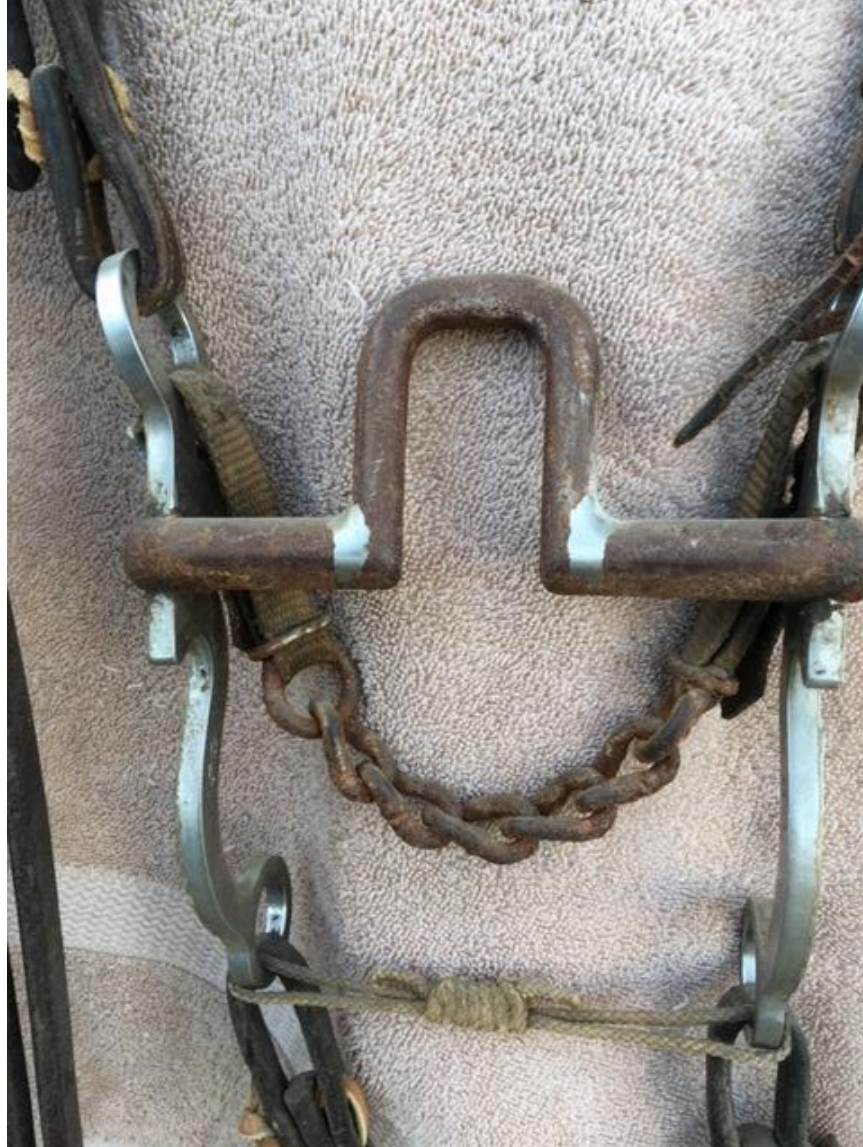




















Legal when used one-handed, but Illegal  
when used two-handed as a snaffle



## Robart™ Aluminum Precision Spring High Port

★★★★★ [35 Reviews](#)



# Illegal Curb Bits

















Illegal – Bars are not smooth



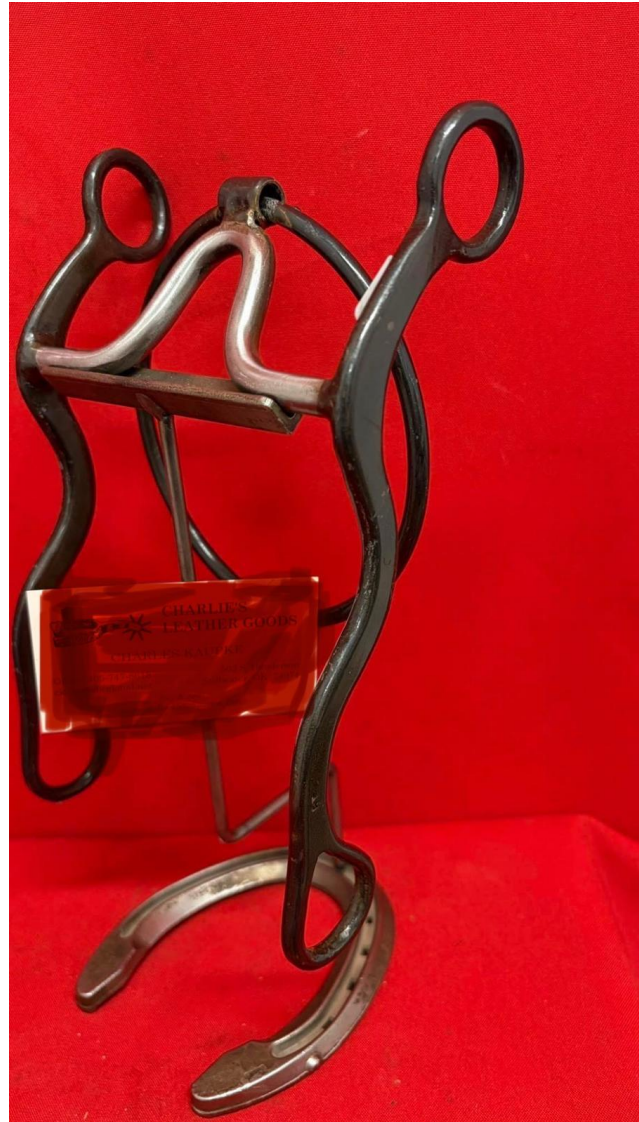




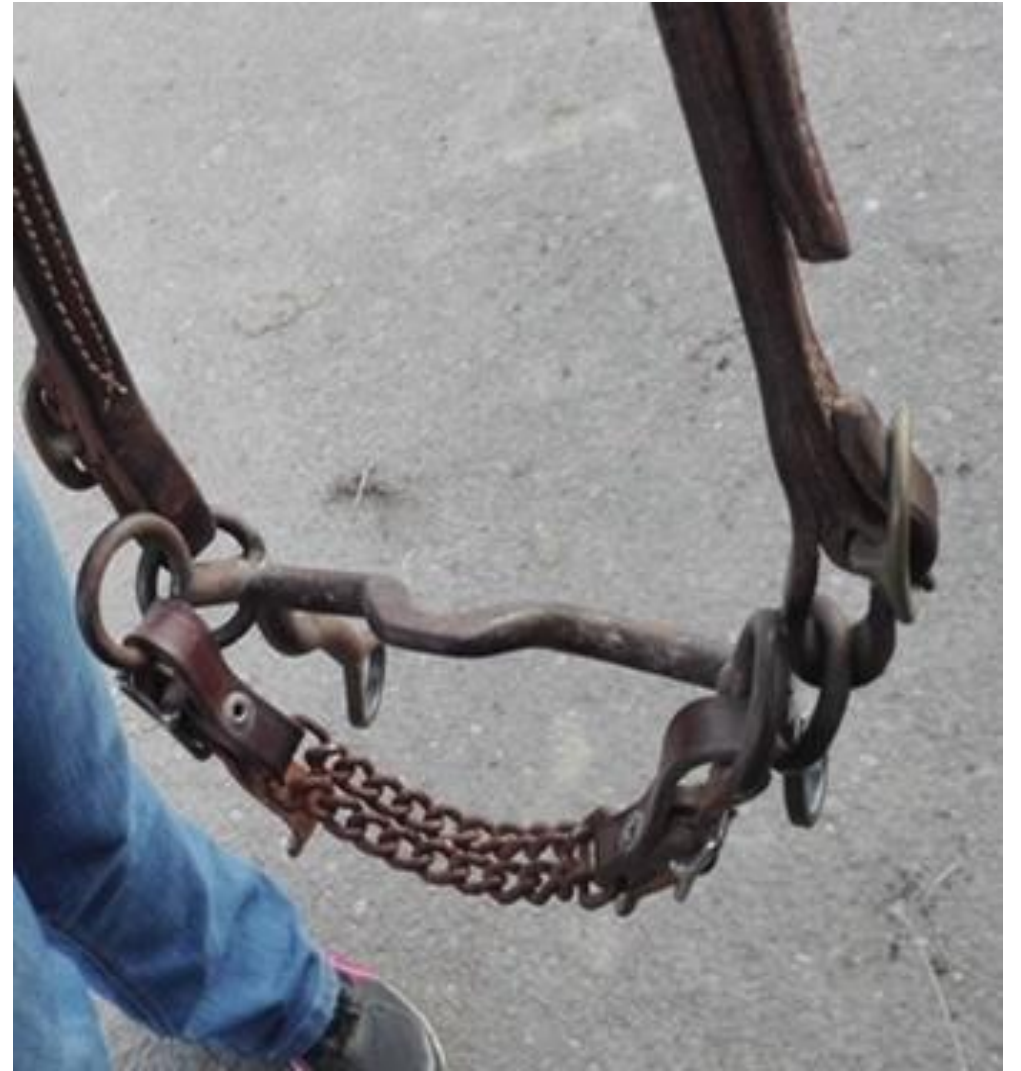
**Illegal - Port filed to a point**

























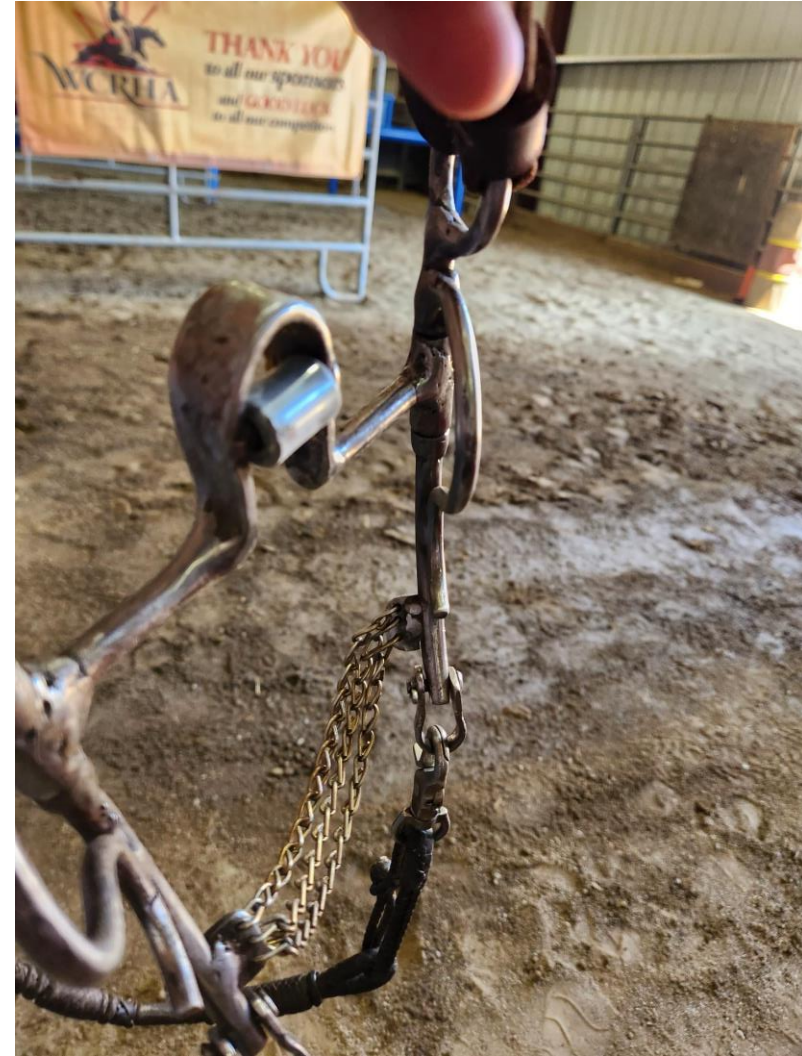




**Illegal – Sharpened**

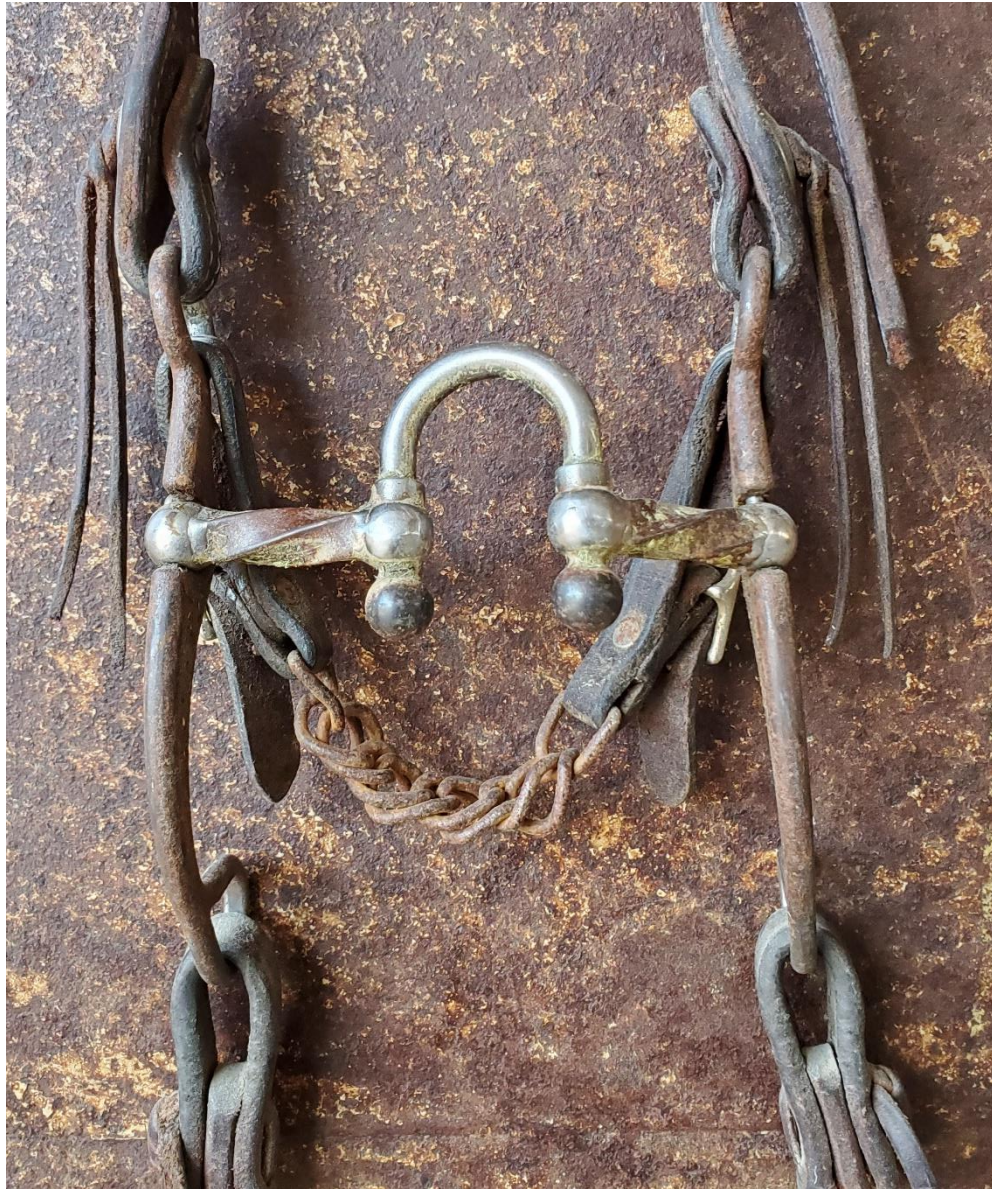




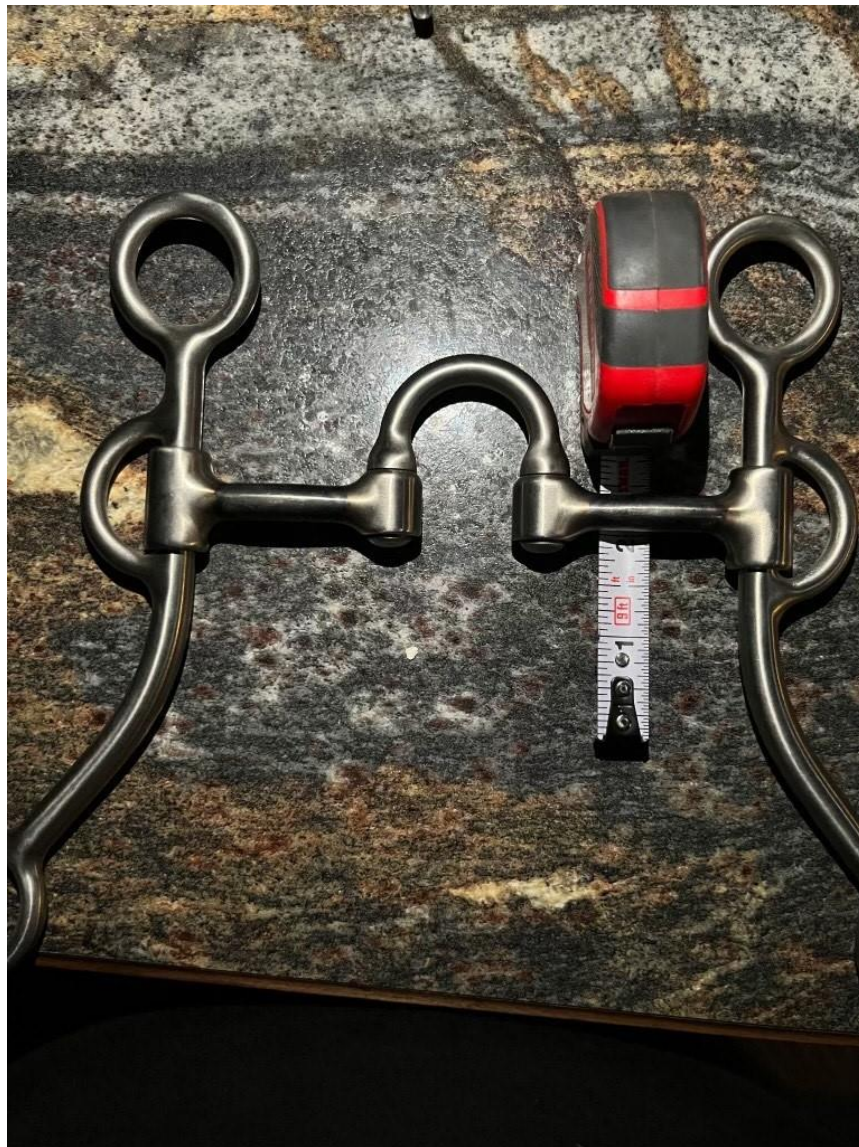
















**Illegal – Flat Bar**



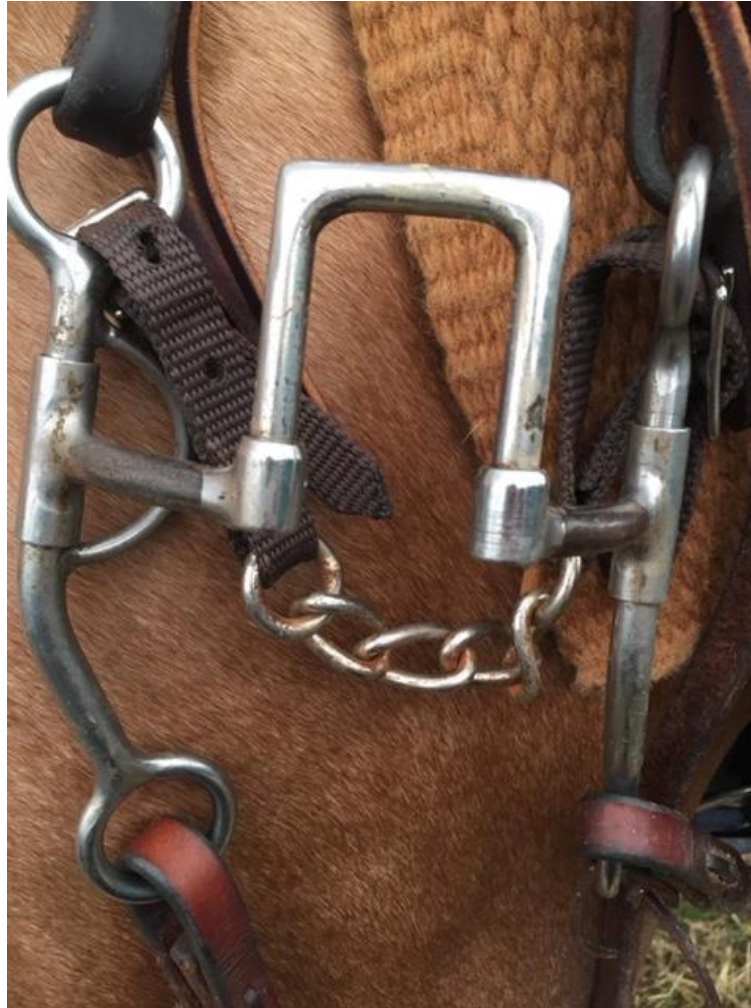
Illegal – Flat Bar



**Illegal – Flat Bar**



**Illegal – Port has a Knife Edge**



**Illegal – Port too Square/Sharp**





**Illegal – Off Set Port**



**Illegal – Off Set Port**



**Illegal – Off Set Port**



**Illegal – Off Set Port**



**Illegal – Backwards Port**



**Illegal – Backwards Port**







**Illegal – Slip or Gag Bit**



**Illegal – Slip or Gag Bit**



**Illegal – Slip or Gag Bit**



**Illegal – Slip or Gag Bit**

# Miscellaneous Legal Equipment





## Legal – Horse Nasal Strips

# Miscellaneous Illegal Equipment





## Illegal – Belly Bands

*Can be worn in warm up arenas but not  
in make-up or show pen*



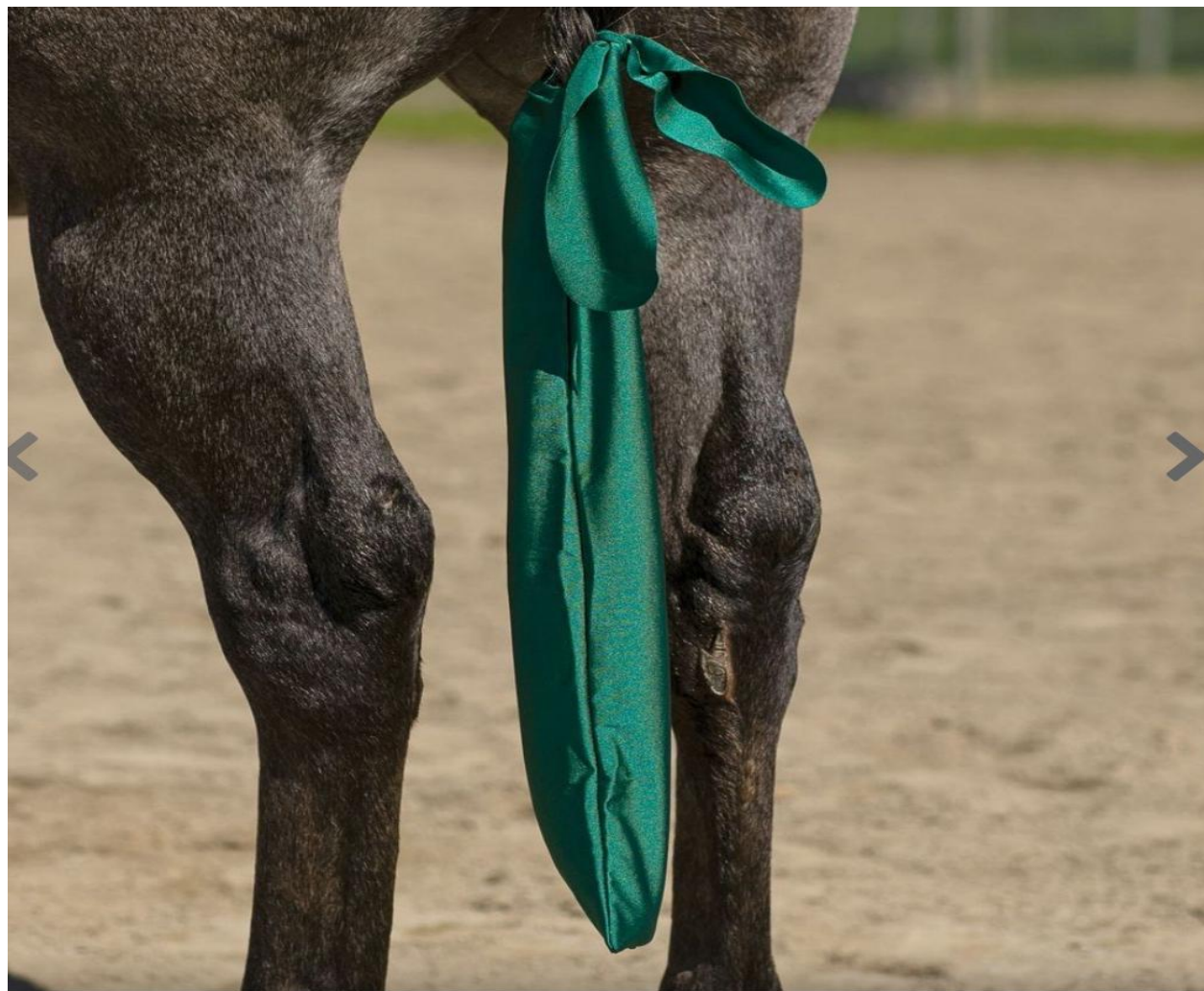
**Illegal – Compression Mask**  
*Can be worn in warm up arenas  
but not in make-up or show pen*



**Illegal – Excessively weighted fake tails**



**Illegal to Show With Braided Tail**



**Illegal in Show Arena**



**Illegal – Non-standard oval  
bit guard attached to shank**

# NRHA Bit Gauge Information



### 5. Curb Bit Mouthpiece Measurements

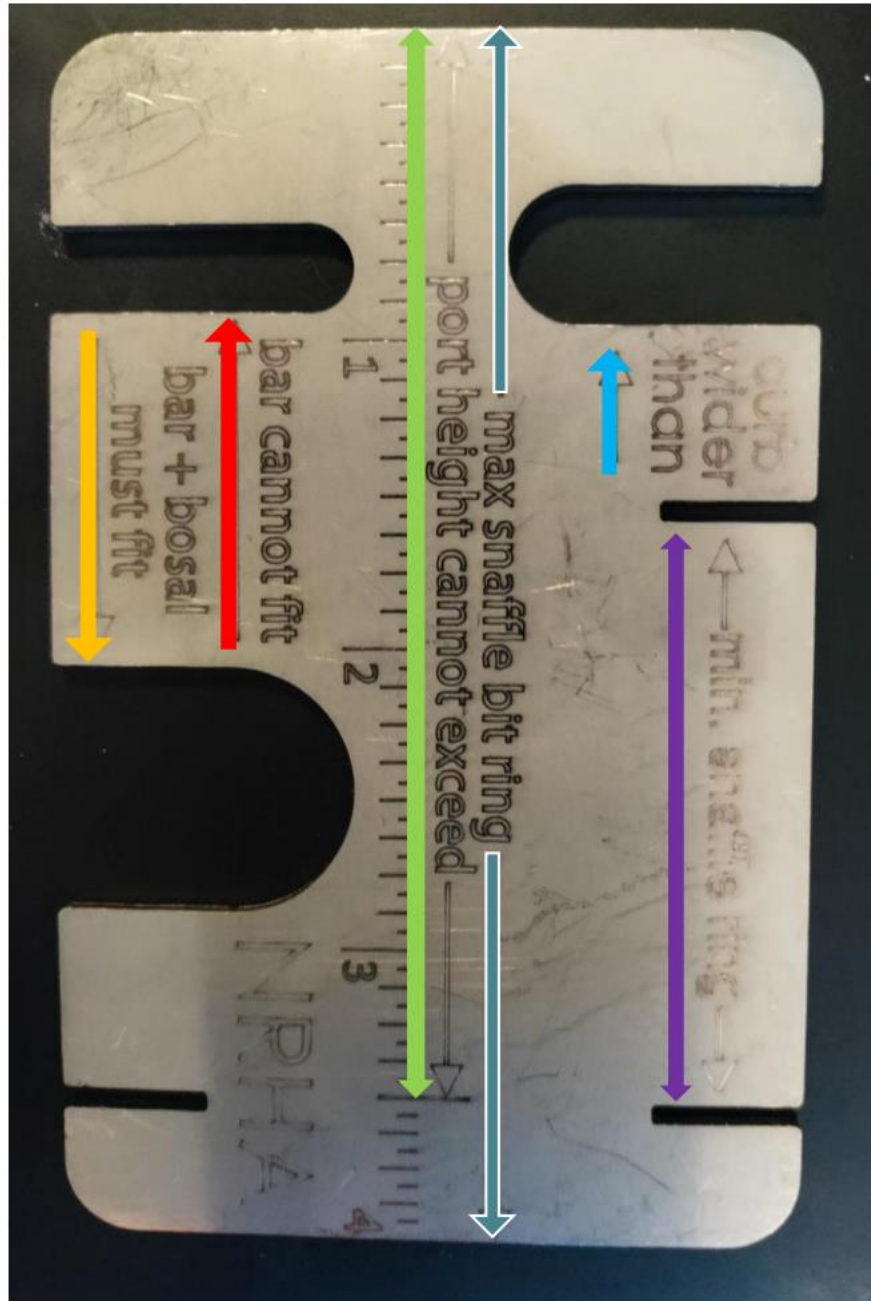
If the round stock bar space of the mouthpiece fits into #5, the curb bit is **ILLEGAL**.

### 4. Bosal Cheek & Bar Measurement

If the cheek piece of the bosal does not fit into #4 the bosal is **ILLEGAL**. If the round stock bar space of the mouthpiece of a shank bit measured 1" in from the cheek doesn't fit into #4, it is **ILLEGAL**

### 3. Port Height Measurement

If the height of the mouthpiece, from the bottom of the bar to the apex of the port exceeds the overall length of #3, the bit is **ILLEGAL**.



### 2. Curb Strap Measurement

If the width of the curb strap fits in slot #2, the curb strap is **ILLEGAL**

### 1. Snaffle Bit Ring Measurement

If the diameter of the Snaffle Bit ring is smaller than the distance between slots #1, the Snaffle Bit is **ILLEGAL**

#### **\*\* Snaffle Bit Ring Diameter Measurement \*\***

If the diameter of the Snaffle Bit ring exceeds the overall length of the entire gauge, the Snaffle Bit is **ILLEGAL**

#### **\*\* Shank Length \*\***

If the length of the shank is longer than the official NRHA Handbook, the bit is **ILLEGAL**.

### Curb Bit Mouthpiece

#### Measurements:

If the round stock bar space of the mouthpiece fits into #5, the curb bit is ILLEGAL.

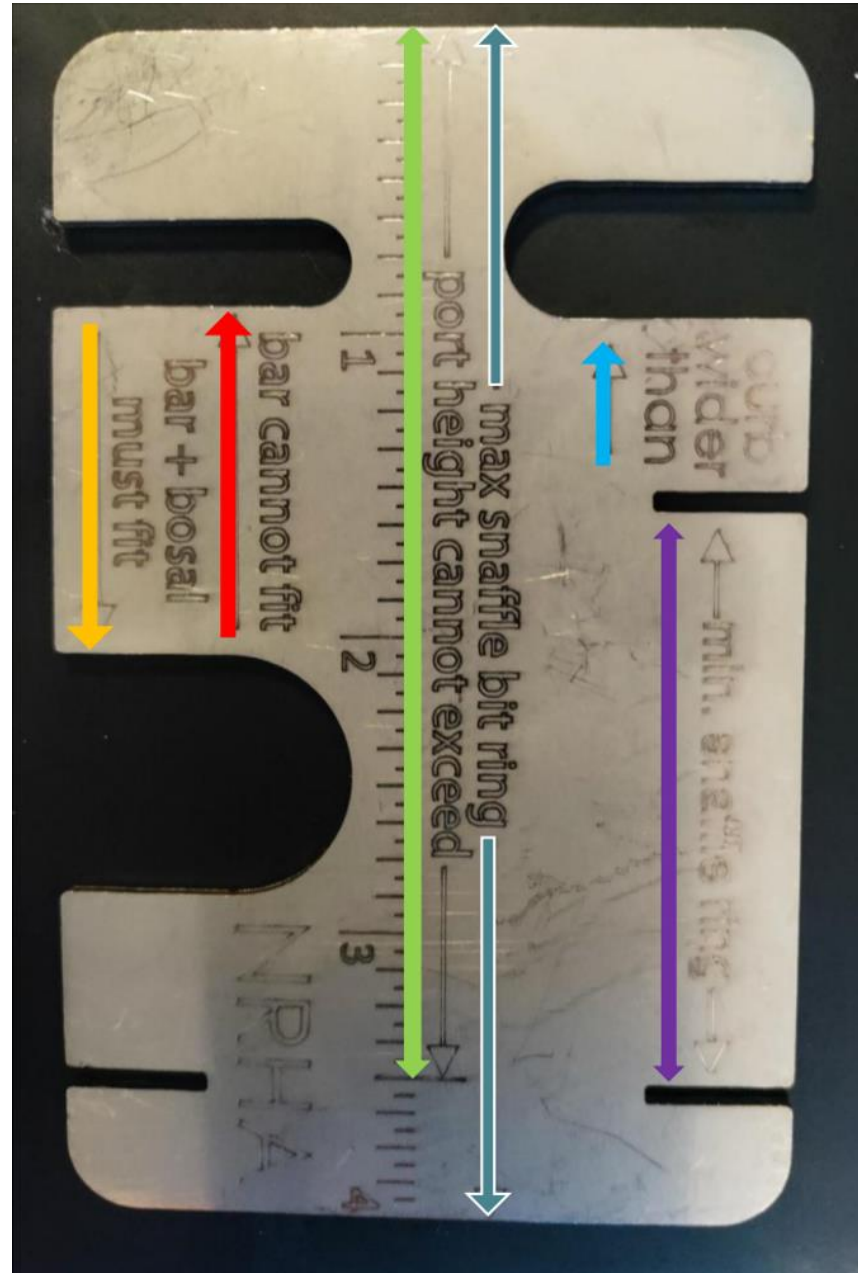
### Bosal Cheek & Bar

#### Measurement:

If the cheek piece of the bosal does not fit into #4 the bosal is ILLEGAL. If the round stock bar space of the mouthpiece of a shank bit measured 1" in from the cheek, doesn't fit into #4, it is ILLEGAL.

### Port Height Measurement:

If the height of the mouthpiece, from the bottom of the bar to the apex of the port, exceed the overall of #3, the bot is ILLEGAL.



### Curb Strap Measurement:

If the width of the curb strap fits in slot #2, the curb strap is ILLEGAL.

### Snaffle Bit Ring Measurements:

If the diameter of the snaffle bit is smaller than the distance between slot #1, the Snaffle Bit is ILLEGAL.

### Snaffle Bit Ring Diameter Measurements:

If the diameter of the Snaffle Bit ring exceeds the overall length of the entire gauge, the Snaffle Bit is ILLEGAL.

### Snaffle Bit Shank Length:

If the length of the shank is longer than the official NRHA Handbook, the bit is ILLEGAL.

# NRHA Pre/Post Check



# Pre-Check

When a pre-check is used, it is strongly recommended that there be a designated area in close proximity to the pre-check judge for the checked horses to remain until they entered the arena.

When a pre-check is used, the presence of fresh blood or any other evidence that any act of abuse has occurred prior to the check will result in a No Score.

If illegal equipment is presented at the pre-check, the exhibitor will not receive a No Score if he/she is able to correct the problem without delaying the class. If a checked horse leaves the field of vision of the pre-check judge prior to showing, the pre-check judge is to recheck the horse before allowing it to enter the arena.

Be aware of any abusive situations that may occur in the warmup area.

# Post Check

If there is any doubt that a bit is not legal, the benefit of the doubt goes to the exhibitor. Ask the exhibitor not to show in this equipment until you get an official ruling from the Judges Committee. Request a photo and send it to the Judges Committee for an official ruling.