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Product Review

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## **GIVE YOUR HORSES A BREAK**

### **Dr. Cook's Bitless Bridle**

All of us have those good old reliable school horses that safely and patiently pack around beginner riders, occasionally cheating around the corners but otherwise good solid citizens that work hard and earn their keep. These horses often endure daily punishment from their riders; most riders never intend to punish the horse but as beginners struggle to find their balance in the saddle, invariably the horse is hit in the mouth and slammed in the back, time after time. These horses are priceless to any lesson or trail program; wouldn't it be nice if we could keep them happy and fit for years to come?

Now, with Dr. Cook's Bitless Bridle, there is a way to protect your horse's mouth from the inadvertent abuse that beginner riders dish out. We gave it a try on several school horses, from beginner to advanced, and found that all horses worked well and stayed in control, the same as if they had a bit in their mouths.

The Bitless Bridle is specially designed to operate with nose and jaw pressure, instead of pressure in the mouth. It is made of quality leather and has the look of an English bridle. The noseband sits lower than normal on the face and then criss-crosses underneath the horse's chin, so that you still have direct-rein control. The bridle comes with English style reins that attach to rings under the chin so that when the reins are pulled, the noseband cinches up around the nose.

In all three horses that we rode in the Bitless Bridle, the control was great and the horses worked as well or better than they do in a regular bridle. The beginner and intermediate horses were in control and it felt about the same as riding in a regular bridle. When it came to higher level work in the more advanced horse, like collection and lateral work, the horse was a little less reluctant to yield, but by adjusting the noseband a little lower, you could exert about the same amount of control that you had with a snaffle.

Many of us have known for some time that some horses work better when you ride them in a halter than they do in a bridle. Not all horses can take meaningless and relentless pressure on their mouths. However, most prudent instructors would be reluctant to give a lesson on a horse with just a halter and no bridle because they would not want to stand up in court and try to defend why they weren't using a bridle when that is the normal means used to control a horse while riding. It would be unlikely that a judge, jury or attorneys would understand why some horses are better without a bit in their mouths.

Although there has never been a liability issue with the Bitless Bridle, it seems like it would hold up in court as a real bridle, since it is manufactured and sold as

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a bridle. Additionally, Dr. Cook has put lots of research into the bridle, how it works and how beneficial it is to horses.

There is no bit or bridle or training device that is the end-all, be-all for horses, but I think that many horses may benefit from the Bitless Bridle, whether they have to endure the brutal hands of the beginner rider or perhaps because their mouths and psyches have been permanently damaged from intentional abuse. Even if your only goal is to make the horse more comfortable so that he can do his job in a willing and relaxed manner, the Bitless Bridle is worth the investment.

For more information on the Bitless Bridle, visit [www.bitlessbridle.com](http://www.bitlessbridle.com) or call 866 235 0938

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