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The use of training aids (gadgets) within equitation: Meritorious or detrimental?

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Draw-reins are one of the most common training aids (gadgets) used to set the horse's head in the desired position. While almost ubiquitous in the training of showjumpers, they are inappropriate when the horse is actually jumping. They provide additional leverage in the rider's hands and allow the rider to 'force' the horse to lower its head and flex its cervical vertebrae. Several other gadgets 'fix' head position, alter outline and develop the 'way of going' of the horse on the lunge. Some examples include side-reins, lungie-bungie, chambon, de Gogue and Pessoa training devices. Based on the premise that the elastic properties encourage the horse to relax and take contact, the lungie-bungie is supposed to aid the acceptance of the bit when the horse is being lunged. The chambon is said to generate correct muscle development in the horse. Originally, it was confined to lunging and free schooling exercises although some riders now use it during ridden work. Incorrect usage could result in the horse leaning on the forehand and may generate pain in neck muscles, denigrate the horse's natural gaits and necessitate retraining of the horse. The de Gogue emanated from French equitation and is closely aligned (and occasionally used in conjunction) with the chambon. It applies pressure on the bit (horse's mouth) and poll while encouraging the horse to draw its nose caudally and flex the neck. The Pessoa uses a system of ropes and pulleys to persuade the horse to engage itself properly. Any gadget that applies pressure to the horse's mouth could diminish the deceleration effects of the bit through head lowering or neck shortening. This might lead to an increase in confusion and conflict behaviours due to inconsistent or unpredictable signal-response features of mouth pressure. In general, the reason for using these training aids is to lighten the horse's forehand and make the horse more sensitive and responsive when ridden. Gadgets may be effective when properly used, but misuse occurs frequently and novice equestrians require appropriate supervision with all items of training apparatus.