

The Chifney Bit by Rebecca McKeever



Also known as "the stallion bit" or the "anti-rearing bit", as the name suggests, this is a bit for unruly horses or horses that are a bit strong at times. I was first introduced to these bits during my stint working at Thistledown Racetrack in Ohio. Many young racehorses are nervous and excited to get out onto the track and run. Some of these youngsters can be quite a handful and of course we were dealing with stallions. Over the years and at various stud farms where I have worked, (TB, Arabian etc) I have seen this bit used expertly for the stallions, especially when breeding mares. Make no mistake: there is a right way to use this bit and a wrong way. You cannot be heavy handed because this can be a severe bit. You never, ever ride in this bit. It is for leading only. So that being said, this bit must be fitted properly. There are two types: a straight mouth and a port mouth. The straight mouth is the less severe and should be tried first. The chifney is fitted like any other bit. So if your horse wears sports a 6" snaffle, he will need a 6" chifney. There are two ways to attach a chifney. First is a stand-alone headstall that is adjustable (like a western bridle). If you are using a headstall,

you can attach the chifney directly to the bridle without using the clips. The second method is by using a halter and using chifney clips to clip the bit to the sides of the halter. To use a halter, however, the halter must be fitted properly. It must be high enough so that the chifney, when clipped in, still gives you one wrinkle in the corner of the mouth, much like any other bit. The other variation is that when using a headstall, the lead is clipped directly into the



third ring. When using a halter, many people use a third clip to attach the third ring to the halter (under the horse's chin) and loop the lead shank through the chifney ring as well as the halter ring. This last option is usually for a horse that only needs mild correction.

So how does it work? If you have a horse that rears, bolts forward, drags you off and in general leaves you in the dust for other things, this correction bit might help. As the horse moves forward or rears up into the bit, pressure is applied to the tongue. Stand to one side, out of the way of feet and give one or two sharp tugs downward. Do not be heavy handed and do not hang on the bit. It doesn't usually

take much pressure for a horse to give in. In many cases, unruly horses can do away with a chifney in short order. For safety reason, many stallion handlers will use a chifney because the stopping power is there when you need it. Now all this might be controversial and I've heard the scuttle that you can break a horse's jaw with a chifney. But I have never seen this in all my years of racehorse and stallion handling. This is just an alternative method to a chain going over the nose, in the mouth, under the chin or under the lip - all methods which cause the horse pain and commonly used, especially here in the States. Personally speaking, as a long time horse person and horse listener, no device should take the place of proper training. If you are going to keep a colt as a stallion start working with them as youngsters to respect you. Once they respect you they will listen to you when you ask them to ignore the mares and keep to the task at hand. There is no training device that can or should replace you!



*A Horse
is an
Angel
Without
Wings*