

Halter Fit -

Fitting a halter is as important as picking the correct halter for your donkey. While a nylon web halter is used in this guide as a visual aide, there are four key places to use for halter fit regardless of the type of halter you use.

1. **The crown/poll strap** - this should sit right behind the ears and be tight enough to allow the noseband, cheek, and throatlatch to sit in their correct positions.
2. **The noseband** - this should sit between the cheekbone and before the nasal bone.
3. **The cheek** - the end buckle of the cheek piece should not touch/hit the cheekbone.
4. **The throatlatch** - should be tight enough so a hoof cannot get caught but not so tight to apply pressure on the bottom of the jaw/cut off any air.

The crown/poll strap will impact the placement of the noseband, cheek strap, and throatlatch. Equines (horses, donkeys, mules, etc) have a fragile nasal bone and a halter that has a noseband sitting too low can damage this bone easily.



To the right is a photo of a donkey skull. It shows the thin, delicate nasal bone, the nasal cavity, and cheek bone (the ridge under the orbital (eye) socket but above the teeth). A halter noseband, no matter the type of halter, should fit between the cheek bone and nasal bone so that it does not hit the cheekbone nor put pressure on the nasal bone (causing it to fracture or break). If it sits even lower than the nasal bone it can impede the donkey's breathing in addition to being uncomfortable, and possibly harmful. The crown/poll strap should also sit right behind the skull and ears so that it does not harm the delicate vertebrae.

Don't forget: you may have to adjust your halters, or even choose a different size, for different seasons. Donkeys with a heavy winter coat may need to go up a size from summer to winter or have their halter adjusted to accommodate their hair.

After you put your donkey's halter on it is always important to ensure it has been properly "settled" into place.

- Look at them straight on to ensure the noseband is horizontal, not sitting higher or lower on one side
- Ensure the cheek pieces are level
- Run a finger under the straps to lay the hair down in the direction it grows
- If you do not have a bridle path trimmed in their mane, or their mane roached, ensure their mane is not caught in a buckle or the straps and lay it flat under the crown of the halter



This is a correctly fitting halter for the donkey.

- The halter is the proper size which allows the crown/poll strap to be adjusted so the noseband sits above the nasal bone but the cheek strap and square buckle isn't hitting or touching the cheek bone.
- Most donkeys have white noses, making it easy to know where to place the noseband: right where the white meets the gray (or brown or black or red) fur!
- The throatlatch is not too tight so that it is pressing into the jaw of the donkey, however, it is not loose enough for a hoof or other object to get caught.
- The crown/poll strap is sitting correctly behind the ears, not too far back and on the donkey's delicate vertebrae.
- The "tail" of the crown/poll strap is not tucked into the buckle in this picture. When in a show it is proper etiquette to tuck this extra in to provide a cleaner, tidier look. Leaving it untucked, however, allows quicker access to undo the halter in an emergency.



The halter shown here is **too large** for the donkey.

- The location of the noseband will impede breathing, and risks damaging or fracturing the nasal bone.
- The nose band is too big around, allowing for too much movement, even if it is adjusted to the correct location.
- The crown/poll strap is improperly adjusted so that it is too long, and the noseband and throatlatch hang too low. A donkey can get it's hoof caught or another object in a throatlatch this loose.
- The loose portions of the halter allow for many opportunities to get caught or tangled on objects or tack.



This halter is the correct size, however:

- The crown/poll strap is sitting too far back on the donkey's neck - this also impacts where the cheek buckle is sitting which is too close to the bone.
- The crown of the halter will put pressure on delicate vertebrae and can cause discomfort to your donkey. This may result in unwanted behaviors and miscommunications between you and your partner. In certain situations this could even result in fracturing or breaking these delicate vertebrae.



Another example of an improper crown, sitting too far back is pictured here. It is not as extreme as the example on the right but is commonly seen. Often this happens when donkeys have halters meant for horses as a donkey's jaw and crown area is much larger in proportion to their muzzle.



The halter shown here is **too large** for the donkey.

- The crown/poll strap is adjusted as tight as it can go and as a result the throatlatch is acceptable
- The cheek pieces are too long, even punching extra holes in the crown/poll strap would not make this halter properly fit
- The noseband is too low and resting on the end of the delicate nasal bone. Too much pressure (such as a donkey pulling away or being pulled back in a race) could fracture or break the nasal bone.