

## Stud chains, ropes, and control - oh my!

Different halters offer different levels of severity, however, sometimes a nylon web halter or leather halter is the best choice for your donkey but a little more control is still needed. Stud chains are a common way to gain control. A stud chain, sometimes referred to as just a “chain” or even a “shank” can be a helpful tool with proper use; however, misuse becomes abuse. Before getting into ways to use a stud chain there are a few things to keep in mind:

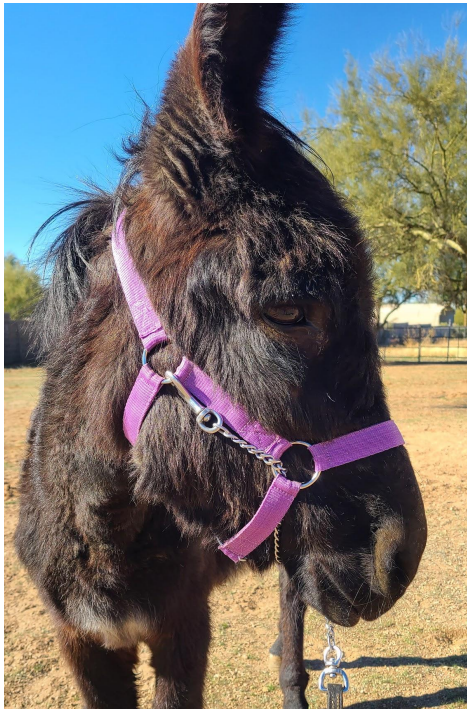
- **NEVER** tie an animal while using a stud chain. This includes ground-tying (your donkey could step on its lead and injure its face). Stud chains are only for when actively working your donkey.
- **Do NOT have constant pressure/tension on the chain**. A stud chain is used in a “quick pop” as a corrective reminder. When there is constant tension your donkey will grow numb to the pain and will even begin to lean into it. The once helpful tool becomes ineffective and potentially damaging.
- **Do not** use a chain when driving a donkey from behind (especially in pack burro/burro race).
  - Driving from behind will place constant pressure on the chain, training the donkey to ignore the chain.
  - You will likely have trouble visually ensuring the chain is in the correct location.
  - Driving from behind increases the likelihood your halter will shift or swivel, causing the off-side to twist too close to their eye, causing discomfort and potentially damage.
  - If you need extra control at the beginning of a race, you can always stop further into the course and quickly reconfigure your lead rope to be snapped to the halter instead of the chain. It is helpful to thread the tail of your rope through the chin strap of the halter while you do this in case your donkey spooks, you still have a rope to hold onto. Practice swapping your rope from chain to halter at home so you can do it quickly and your donkey isn't made nervous by you quickly working near their face.
- **NEVER** “wrap in” while using a stud chain. The additional weight of your body can be extremely damaging to your donkey's facial anatomy, increasing the likelihood of abraded skin, broken nasal bones, pinched nerves, or damaged blood vessels/bruising.
- **Chains need to always work on a pressure and release system.**
- **NEVER** put the chain through the donkey's mouth or under their lip. This is not only against BRAY rules for events, it can hurt your donkey. Studies have shown it does little to actually increase control. Additionally under the lip/in the mouth can cause the donkey to rear up or throw their head.
- **Never** wrap a stud chain around the noseband of a halter or noseband fleece. This eliminates the pressure-release capability. Consider a 4 knot rope halter instead.
- **Always** ensure your chain is positioned correctly when using it over the nose. Reposition your chain or reconfigure it to under the chin if it has a tendency to droop down their nose lower than the noseband of your halter. A drooping chain can pinch delicate skin or potentially break your donkey's nasal bones.
- **Never** hold the chain in your hands or place fingers through the rings on a chain. Your donkey's sudden movement can cause severe damage to your hands up to and including broken fingers and degloving/traumatic amputation
- **Always** ensure your chain is laying flat against your donkey's face and is not twisted, causing additional pressure points



### Mild Pressure-Release Under the Jaw

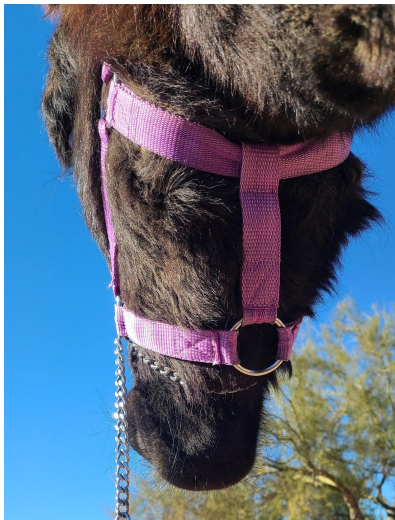
In this set up the chain starts and ends at the lead rope. First it goes from the lead rope to the metal ring (or squares) that connect the noseband and cheekpieces, next it runs under the jaw then through the metal ring (or square) on the other side where it then connects back to the lead rope.

It is comparable to a martingale style dog collar. Arabian horses have this style set up when showing in conformation classes. This is a mild use of the chain as the chain can be popped for correction but releases quickly.



### Pressure-Release Under the Jaw Connected to Cheek

This style of using the chain also goes under the jaw. It clips to the ring that connects the crown/poll strap, throatlatch, and cheek piece on the donkey's **right** side, through the cheek piece/noseband ring (or square), then it then runs under the donkey's jaw and out through the **left** side ring (or square) that connects the noseband/cheek piece, and finally connects to the lead. This style is commonly seen on Quarter Horses in their conformation or showmanship classes. It offers more firm corrections.





### Over the Nose

Pictured is the final acceptable method of chain use: over the nose. The donkey pictured, however, has a paracord braided “chain” which is perfect for those who want something more mild than a chain but still need extra control. Over the nose is best for a donkey that is prone to bolting. Extra caution must be taken that the halter fits properly and the chain (or rope) does not go on the nasal bone. It can be especially dangerous to have a chain on the donkey’s nasal bone.

Similar to the pressure-release under the jaw method above, over the nose has the chain (or rope) clip to the crown/poll strap ring on the donkey’s **left** side, through the noseband/cheek piece ring (or square, as pictured), **over** the nose, then through the **right** side noseband/cheek piece ring (or square), before attaching to the lead.