

## Grazing Muzzles



At an MHC0 Spring Clinic there was some interest in the grazing muzzles that I make for my horses. Below are directions for mini size muzzles and some suggested locations for materials that I have used. These muzzles can be adapted for larger horses too and are especially good for fatter or foundered horses whose grass intake needs to be limited.

These muzzles allow lots of cool air to reach the horse's face and they can drink with them on. You can also make a totally anti-grazing muzzle, if needed, by not cutting the center hole.

### You will need:

**Textaline Fabric.** This is the mesh fabric used in fly masks and I have ordered it from the web at: <http://www.garysupholstery.com/textilene.html> but it is available at other sites as well. Do not use screen, it is not strong enough, won't last long and may injure your horse. Other mesh fabrics that I have tried do not seem to wear well as the Textaline.

**Two plastic horseshoe pads...**the thinnest and cheapest type is best as they are easier to cut.

**Metal rivets.** These are the ones that you get from a harness maker and set with a hammer.

**A halter** that you will be permanently attaching the muzzle to.

**Strong sewing thread** such as fishing line (not the clear plastic stuff) or upholstery thread.

**A large eye needle** such as a darning or needlepoint needle is good. You don't really need it to have a sharp point.

### Instructions:

Cut a hole in the center of the both of the horseshoe pads. This can be done with a wood boring bit but cut with little pressure and check afterwards for any rough spots (can be trimmed with a utility knife). You will have to judge the size of the hole but I have found minis do well with 3/4" . You can always enlarge the hole so don't cut it too big to start, the horses manage to eat just fine from this small hole. You can cut the pads with metal shears as well.



Next, cut both the horseshoe pads into a circle that will cover the bottom of the horse's muzzle. The above grazing hole should be in the center. A mini usually does well with a 4" diameter circle.

Now cut the mesh fabric into a circle...a 14" diameter works for the minis. Cut a small round notch out of one edge of the mesh to accommodate the large ring at the bottom of the noseband. This will enable you to clip on a lead shank to the halter.



Cut a hole in the center of the mesh a bit larger than the hole you cut in the center of the horseshoe pads. Make a 'sandwich' with a pad on top and bottom and mesh in the middle. Drill holes for the rivets. I use 4 holes for mini muzzles. Don't drill too close to the edge of the plastic disks...about a third of the way in from the outside edge seems to work well. Place the rivets. Make sure you put the rivets with the smooth, solid sides on the inside of the muzzle so it is smooth for the horse's lips.



You are now ready to attach the muzzle to the halter:

Use the strong line or thread for this. Line up the notch with the ring on the bottom of the noseband. Mark the circle in quarters and attach two of the marks at the side rings of the halter noseband and one in the center front. I find bulldog clips or clothespins good for this.

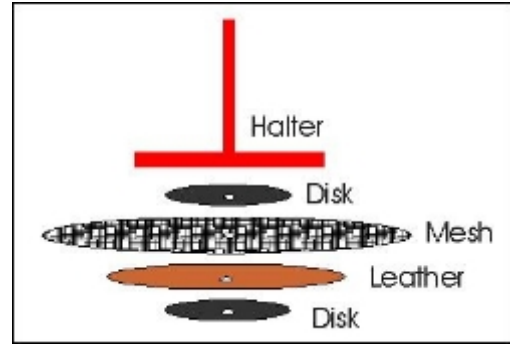
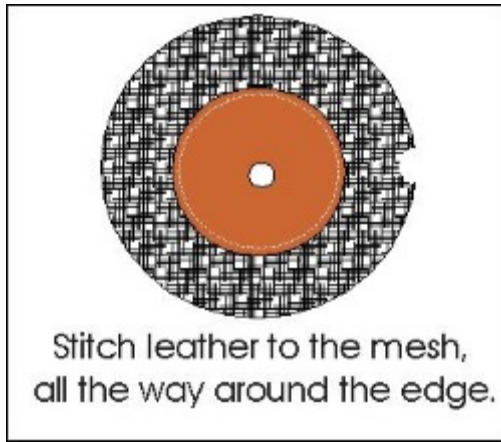
Sew on the rest of the mesh around the noseband of the halter. I use box pleats to make the circle fit but any type of fairly even gathering will work. This fullness makes the muzzle comfortable for the horse's muzzle and nose.

To sew you can run the needle through the mesh holes and wrap it around the whole noseband strap fitting the mesh on the outside of the noseband. (Sewing around the metal loops will keep the muzzle from rotating and you don't have to make any holes in the halter at all).

\*\*\*Your horse will probably NOT like this new eating restriction when it is first put on, so be hard hearted and you will find that they will figure out how to live with it in about an hour and then it will be just fine. I have had one (not too bright) horse that took about a day...trying to make me think he was suffering and couldn't eat with the thing on but I ignored him, and he figured it out by the second day. Keep an eye on the horse, however, for the first little while as they often try and rub the muzzle off, and you don't want them to get caught on anything. \*\*\*

These muzzles should last for one and sometimes two seasons depending on the amount the horse rubs when eating. You can re-use the plastic disks for several muzzles until the center hole gets too large. Do keep an eye on the rivets and replace any that come loose or get lost. If you need to remove rivets you just drill them and they fall out.

I have recently found that some horses tend to wear the mesh quite quickly. I have, therefore made the following addition to my design: Purchase a second hand leather coat at the Salvation Army or other of this type of store. Cut the coat into circles of leather, 4" larger in diameter to the hoof-pad disks you are using. Sew this leather to the mesh, using a strong thread such as fishing line, and assemble the muzzle as before with the leather on the bottom side of the 'sandwich'. I have also found a lightweight Cordura is a great fabric if you cannot find leather.



This addition really increases the life of the muzzle.

If you have any problems understanding these directions or in making and fitting of the muzzles, just let me know. [evdex@oldbellfarm.com](mailto:evdex@oldbellfarm.com)