

Overview of Lunging Equipment

Lunging involves a handler working a horse on a circle. Although it looks easy, lunging is a skill that requires training and practice for both horse and handler. Done correctly on good footing in an appropriately-sized circle, lunging can be a useful component of a horse's training. It can help start a young horse, assist in retraining, provide exercise when the horse can't be ridden and build trust between a handler and a horse. Good lunging practices can build muscle, balance, suppleness and rhythm in a horse.

The choice of equipment that a handler uses in lunging depends on the experience of the handler, the level of training that the horse has achieved and the goals of the lunging session. Here is an overview of the basic articles of tack that may be used for lunging.

Lunge Line

The lunge line is a long, single rein and the main means of communication between the handler and horse during lunging. Through the lunge line, a handler provides subtle aids as when riding. Lunge lines available from Dover Saddlery measure from 25 to 35 feet long (approximately 7.6 to 10.7 meters) to enable the handler to ask the horse to travel on a comfortably-sized circle.



Dover's Lunge Line

Generally, the wider the circle, the better it is for the horse as circling is stressful to the horse's tendons, ligaments and joints. The smaller or tighter the circle, the harder it is on the horse's body.

Lunge lines may be made of 100% cotton webbing, nylon or a blend of the two fibers, and come in a variety of colors from natural to pastels to jewel tones. Some lunge lines have hand stops to assist with grip. Most have a simple clip to attach to the cavesson or bit rings, but some are available with a chain.

Lunge Cavesson

A lunge cavesson at first glance resembles the headstall of a snaffle bridle. Most lunge cavessons have a padded noseband topped with jointed metal pieces that bend over the top of the horse's nose. When sized and adjusted properly, a lunge cavesson remains securely in place during lunging and provides a solid method of control without involving the use of a bit. The noseband of a lunge cavesson is fitted with rings – one in the center and one positioned slightly to each side of center – to which the lunge line can be attached. The cavesson can be used alone or placed over a bridle that has the noseband

removed or relocated downward slightly so as not to interfere with the cavesson's noseband, which should lie on the nasal bone just about four fingers above the nostrils.

A lunge cavesson is a better alternative to a halter for lunging a horse, as a halter offers little control and may inadvertently slip or be pulled into the horse's outside eye during work. Lunge cavessons are available in either leather or heavy-duty nylon webbing, and in pony, cob and horse size.

A Rambo® Micklem Multibridle can be used as a classical lunge cavesson by attaching a lunge line to the ring on the noseband. If extra security is required, it may be necessary to tighten the top back strap by one hole when using the Multibridle as a lunge cavesson.

A Quick Snap Converter is an alternative to using a full lunge cavesson. It is a simple strap that attaches to a bridle to make it perform as a lunge cavesson without adding bulk.

Cadence Lunge Cavesson



Lunging Tips:

- Always wear gloves when lunging a horse. A helmet and sturdy footwear are always appropriate gear as well.
- If you're new to lunging, seek instruction from a qualified instructor.
- If you or your horse is new to lunging, consider using a lunge line that is made of 100% cotton webbing. Cotton webbing is the friendliest lunge line material for novices as it is the least likely type to kink, twist or slip.
- Never wrap a lunge line around your hand or hold the lunge line in loops that can tighten around your hand if the horse panics. Instead, fold the lunge line back and forth and feed the line out from the top of the stack.
- A lunge cavesson should never be fitted over a figure 8 (or grackle) noseband.
- When lunging a horse that has side reins attached to the bit, use a basic snaffle. Many people favor a thick snaffle bit with fixed rings for stability during lunging, especially for young horses.
- If a bridle and bit are used for lunging, a Y-shaped lunging attachment may be useful. This is a simple strap that snaps onto the bit rings and is then connected to the lunge line.

Fold, never loop, a lunge line



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Lunge Whip

A lunge whip is yet another aid for the handler. It acts like a rider's leg as it is used primarily to move the horse forward or outward on the circle. Lunge whips vary in length from approximately 5 to 7 feet, and have soft, light lashes about 6 feet long—just enough to tickle the horse if needed as a driving aid. Some lunge whips are designed to collapse for easy storage or travel, such as the Fleck Composite Lunge Whip.

Side Reins

Side reins run from the surcingle to the rings of the bit. They can help a horse learn contact with the bit, gain balance and suppleness or find self-carriage. Used incorrectly, they can cause a horse to over flex. A horse has to become accustomed to the feel of side reins gently over time, with them adjusted loosely at first and gradually shortened to where they need to be. Seek the guidance of a knowledgeable trainer if you and your horse are not familiar with using of side reins.

Various types of side reins are available from Dover Saddlery, with the most commonly used types involving either a rubber donut or an elastic insert to provide give. A rubber donut adds a small amount of give as well as weight to the side rein. An elastic insert provides more stretch than a donut and less weight, but may encourage some horses to pull on the bit. Horses respond differently to the give provided through a side rein; consult a trainer or knowledgeable friend who is familiar with your horse for help in determining the type of side rein to use.

Leather side reins with rubber donuts, such as Cadence Side Reins, have clips to attach to the bit rings and buckles for length adjust-

ment. Easy-adjust side reins are also available with a rubber donut. They are made of webbing and feature a series of dee rings to make the side rein length adjustable through the use of a clip instead of a buckle.

Leather side reins with elastic inserts, such as Dover's Side Reins, have a clip to attach to the bit ring and a buckle for length adjustment. Easy-adjust side reins are also available in a model that has elastic inserts.

Protective Boots or Leg Wraps

Always use some type of protective leg wear or polo wraps on a horse that is being lunged. A horse is more likely to interfere, which is when one of its own hooves hits an opposing leg, when it is traveling on a circle. Bell boots may also be appropriate if a horse tends to overstep, and many people always use them whenever they're lunging a horse. See "How to Select Horse Boots" for information on selecting and sizing boots for your horse.



Training Surcingle

A training surcingle is a wide band of leather or webbing that buckles onto the horse like a girth. It is equipped with dee rings placed at various intervals on each side for use with side reins or long lines. Surcingles are available in cob and horse sizes, and may be placed over a saddle or used in place of a saddle. Leather panels or fleece lining in the center of the surcingle protect the saddle's seat when placed on top of a saddle. When used directly on

a horse's back, extra padding such as a fleece surcingle pad should be used for cushioning. A surcingle should be positioned carefully so that it doesn't put pressure on the spine or dig into the horse's shoulder blades, and where it does not interfere with the horse's elbows during movement.

Tip: When using a saddle during lunging, either remove the irons or run them up and secure the stirrup leather. Dover's Stirrup Keeper is an even easier way to hold stirrups in place.



Dover Side Reins

Cadence Side Reins with Donut

Dover's Easy Adjust Side Reins with Elastic



Polo Wraps

Ribbed Bell Boots



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