



Kenda Lenseigne uses a roping style rein when in competition. This combined with a light-weight saddle and tack set-up keeps her efficient and her horse bearing less static weight.

Tack Transgressions:

Breaking Murphy's Law

by Kenda Lenseigne, CMSA World and National Champion

Murphy's Law: An adage that is typically stated as: "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." We may have all experienced this at one point or another in the arena. Mishaps can happen all the time, and hindsight is 20/20 when "what went wrong" could have been avoided. There's a reason that top shooters have their own pre-shoot checklist and that's to eliminate errors that might cost them a podium finish.

Here are a few tack check tips and thoughts that might help to eliminate as many Murphy's Mishaps as possible before we ride to the mounted shooting battlefield.

Less is more. The more variables we add to the tack mix in the competition arena, the greater our chances of a mishap. In this issue I will go over only two pieces of tack, even though there are many items we could talk about.

Lets start with our reins.

Single Rein vs. Split Rein: I use a 1" thick leather braided single (roping style) rein in competition.

Why: A short single rein eliminates possible mishaps that can happen with split reins, given the fact that mounted shooting is a one-handed sport. Using a single rein enables a rider to walk the fingers down the rein for a NICE neck rein (see *April 2012 WSH Magazine, Neck Reining - Are You Naughty or Nice?*). I can then walk my fingers to the other side if I need to change direction and not have to worry about losing my slack or tension as can happen with a split rein. When slack or tension is lost with a split rein, the only efficient way to get it back is to reach up with our free hand and fix it. If we have a gun in that "free" hand, we run the risk of unintentionally pointing the gun at our horse, or being forced to holster the gun when we had not planned to.

Murphy's Mishaps with a split rein: Next time you run into me at a shoot, ask me how I know the following (hint: it's all happened).

- The tail end of a split rein whips around in the motion of a turn and lands conveniently in between the cocked hammer and the gun.
- The rein tail wraps around the front leg of the horse like a vine, causing uneven tension or slack on one side.
- The rein tail gets wedged and stuck in between the rider and the saddle, or the saddle/stirrup fender and the horse.
- The horse trips or slips and the rein slides through the rider's hand, leaving the rider unable to recover the rein without first holstering the gun – or in a dangerous attempt to adjust the rein length with the gun in hand, pointing the barrel right at the horse's neck.

To offer a counterpoint, I am an advocate for using split reins in everyday work or training. This enables me to gather the hip, lift the shoulder, bend and flex my horse's neck and body as I sculpt my athlete at home. In my training program, I have not paid an entry fee, I am not on the clock, and there is nothing on the line to win or lose should one of the above-mentioned situations occur.

Quick tip: For those of us with small or short horses, if the rein is too long, tie a knot at the very end of the rein tail. This will keep the rein from dragging the ground and also give it some weight so it will drape nicely over the horse's neck.

Our Saddle: There are several mishaps waiting to trip up the unwary rider when it comes to the most expensive piece of leather we're likely to buy, but perhaps the biggest occurs not in the arena, but in the tack store. The less static weight a horse has to carry, the easier it is for them to do their job efficiently. I have heard many timed event equestrians state that every 10lbs on the horse's back equals a 10th of a second.

This usually produces some lively debate based on athletic

ability of our horses, but it's a statement that should provoke some thought as you start tallying the weight of your tack, the saddle and rigging specifically. Now add your body weight plus chinks/chaps, guns and gun belt. The pounds add up quickly, and it's all resting on the 4 little pins that are our horse's legs.

There have been many innovative measures in cutting weight and size throughout our culture's technological advances. Just take a minute to remember the old brick-like cell phones (you know you felt cool when you pulled the antenna out) in comparison to our sleek smartphones. Now look across the spectrum of timed athletic events. Road racing bicycles now weigh as little as six pounds. (that's 2 lbs. lighter than a gallon of milk). The lightest running shoes weigh only three ounces.

Our reasons for riding and competing are as varied as our personalities. Some are content riding to their personal best each stage. Some are thrilled that they can spend the weekend with their horse and mounted shooting friends and some are looking for that ten-pounds-tenth-of-a-second trim to ride to the top. Whatever your goals are, the next time you pull ol' Hoss out of the trailer and heft your saddle on his back, ask yourself if his load is light or if you are weighing him down. 🐾



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