

**Table 1 from Part III of the article by Robert Cook (2003)  
"Fear of the Bit: A welfare problem for horse and rider"**

NAME, age and sex of horse:
BREED or TYPE:
For how many years have you owned the horse?
Riding discipline (Pleasure, trail, endurance, dressage, combined training, etc)?
Date on which questionnaire completed:
When did problems commence and what was the first problem?
In what month/year did you start using the Bitless Bridle?
Time interval since Bitless Bridle first used:
What bits had you tried before dispensing with bits altogether?
Is your horse also barefoot?
When (approximately) did you commence the barefoot program?
Have the changes noted above occurred during a period when the horse has also become barefoot?

Item	Behavioral Profile Questionnaire	when bitted Y/N/NA	when bitless Y/N/NA
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In the following line items, strike out any features that are not applicable, or annotate as necessary. If you need more space for comments, add a numbered note as an attachment to the questionnaire. **Especially serious problems are highlighted in red.**

**PAIN (expressed predominantly by various manifestations of FEAR)**

1	<b>FRIGHT:</b> Anxious, unpredictable, 'hot', nervous, fearful, shy, spooky, panicky, tense, stressed		
2	<b>FLIGHT:</b> Difficult to slow or stop, bolting, 'rushing the jumps,' 'running through the bit'		
3	<b>FIGHT:</b> Argumentative, confrontational, resistant, aggressive, bossy, cranky, surly, resentful, adversarial, angry		
4	<b>FACIAL NEURALGIA:</b> The head shaking syndrome; tossing, 'flipping the nose' at exercise/rest, summer/winter		

**MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS IN THE STABLE AND PRIOR TO RIDING**

5	Your horse is difficult to catch in the paddock (anticipating pain at exercise, but also perhaps because of head shyness from trigeminal neuralgia)		
6	Difficulty in putting the bridle on; holds head high, clenches teeth, panics at the very sight of a bridle, breaks out in a sweat		
7	Difficulty in taking the bridle off: horse fails to open its mouth, head jerks up and horse pulls away		
8	Stand-offish in stable, unfriendly, pins ears, bites or threatens to bite. Turns head away and swings quarters around		
9	Runs wild on the lunge rein (with/without side reins) and may eventually fall, panics when lunged with a bit in the mouth		
10	<b>Difficult to mount, fidgety, tense (neck braced, ears pinned), moves away prematurely, might even rear</b>		

Key: ESP = elevation of the soft palate  
DDSP = dorsal displacement of the soft palate

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Item	<b>Behavioral Profile Questionnaire</b>	when bitted Y/N/NA	when bitless Y/N/NA
<b>PROBLEMS THAT MAKE RIDING ITSELF MORE COMPLICATED, DIFFICULT, OR DANGEROUS</b>			
11	<b>Bucking or bounding and sometimes spinning. Often triggered by a request for an upward transition from trot to canter</b>		
12	<b>Rearing, with or without flipping over backwards (somersaulting). Potentially fatal to horse and rider</b>		
13	<b>Above' or 'ahead of the bit' (poking nose in the air), high-headed, 'star gazing, "braced,' avoiding the bit, hollow-backed</b>		
14	<b>Behind the bit,' 'overbent,' over-flexed, tucks chin into chest, 'spitting the bit,' 'over bridled'</b>		
15	<b>Grabs the bit,' i.e. puts the bit between the upper and lower first cheek teeth. The mouth will be open</b>		
16	<b>Hair-trigger response to the aids, hypersensitivity to the bit</b>		
17	<b>Atrial fibrillation; possibly triggered by dehydration from bit-induced sweating, &amp; exacerbated by use of a diuretic (Salix)</b>		
18	Lack of finesse in control, general 'unhappiness' when exercised		
19	Lazy, dull, tires prematurely, lack of 'life force,' subdued, ring sour, need for spurs		
20	Unfocussed, fussy, fidgety at work. Horse thinking of its painful mouth rather than where it is going		
21	Sweating excessively, hot and restless at exercise, "lathering-up"		
22	Lack of progress or slow progress in response to training, 'stagnation'		
23	During endurance rides, refusal, reluctance or difficulty in eating or drinking adequately because of the bit and perhaps a sore mouth also		
24	Ear pinning at exercise, threatens to bite other horses that come alongside, rarely pricks ears at exercise (see also line items # 39 and 43)		
25	Lip slapping (noisy flapping of lower lip) at work		
26	Napping (refusal or reluctance to go forward), 'herd-bound', 'freezing'		
27	Backing-up to avoid the bit ('sucking-back'). A habit of reversing rapidly without being asked		
28	Refusal to stand still, constant fidgeting		
29	Impossible to exercise by 'ponying' (as on the racetrack) because of pain in the mouth when led with a bitted bridle		
30	During arena or paddock exercise, repeatedly heads for the stable when passing by the gate		
31	When working or at rest, exhibits multiple wrinkles around nostrils and corner of mouth, pursed lips, lower lip tucked-up		
32	Uncooperative (not a 'team player'), regarding rider as an antagonist & nag rather than as a partner/leader		
33	Anxious expression in the eye, as evinced by a restless or staring eye, or by showing the white of the eye		
34	Crossing the jaw		
35	<b>Fracture of the peak of the nasal bone or lower jaw from the too vigorous application of a mechanical hackamore</b>		

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<b>ADDITIONAL SIGNS ASSOCIATED WITH FACIAL NEURALGIA (THE HEADSHAKING SYNDROME)</b>			
36	Rubbing muzzle or face on fore-leg, at & after exercise, striking at muzzle with fore leg during exercise		
37	Yawning during bridling or application of head collar (often accompanied by head tossing), yawning during or after exercise		
38	Blepharospasm (rapid and often noisy blinking) and/or photophobia (hypersensitivity to bright light)		
39	Grazing on the fly' (eating on the run), grabbing at grass or snatching at the leaves of trees in passing (see also line item # 24)		
40	Sneezing & snorting		
41	Head shyness: Unwilling to have a hose played on its head, difficult to handle (or clip) around the mouth, ears or forelock		
42	Particularly 'difficult' on windy days, in bright sunlight, in the rain, or near trees		
43	During or after exercise, tries to bite at the shank of the hackamore, curb bit, reins, at the rider's boots, or a horse alongside		
44	Watery eyes and nasal discharge accompanying head tossing		
45	Coughing at the start of exercise, or coughing accompanied by headshaking		
46	Twitching of the cheek muscle (masseter muscle) on one or both sides (see also 'grinding of the teeth' on line item 67 below)		
<b>A CASCADE OF BREATHING DIFFICULTIES, mostly caused by the bit restricting the upper airway (throat)</b>			
47	An open mouth ('gaping') lets air into the oral cavity; one of a number of ways in which the bit causes ESP & DDSP		
48	Bit-induced poll flexion (nasal bone vertical to the ground or worse) obstructs the airway at the level of the throat		
49	<b>Tongue 'behind the bit,' 'swallowing the tongue,' obstructs the throat and voice box (larynx)</b>		
50	<b>Tongue over the bit' causes loss of control but can also obstruct the airway</b>		
51	<b>Thick-winded', 'roaring,' laryngeal stridor. Inspiratory obstruction caused by elevation of the soft palate (ESP)</b>		
52	<b>Dorsal displacement of the soft palate (DDSP), 'gurgling,' 'choking-up' or 'choking down.' Gagging/coughing reflexes</b>		
53	<b>Epiglottal entrapment; a sequel to open mouth and subsequent elevation &amp;/or dorsal displacement of the soft palate</b>		
54	<b>Throat obstruction leads to dynamic collapse of the larynx and windpipe, and structural deformity of the windpipe ('scabbard' trachea)</b>		
55	<b>Asphyxia-induced pulmonary edema (pulmonary "bleeding" or exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhage - EIPH)</b>		
56	Explosive coughing at exercise as a post-operative complication of laryngeal tie-back surgery		
57	Thumps' (synchronous diaphragmatic flutter), e.g. from insufficient drinking on a trail ride; dehydration from use of a diuretic (Salix)		
<b>PROBLEMS CAUSED BY DIRECT PHYSICAL TRAUMA BY THE BIT TO THE MOUTH</b>			
58	Sores, chafes, cuts or loss of pigment at the corner of the mouth (angle of lips)		
59	Bruising of the gums at the bars or frank cuts		
60	Inappetence for a day or so after racing or other exercise, resulting from a sore mouth		
61	Dropping food from the mouth ('quidding') because of a sore mouth		
62	Ulcers inside the cheeks from sharp teeth (common). Bleeding from the mouth, as a result of direct trauma from the bit (less common)		
63	<b>Bone spurs (mandibular periostitis) on the bars of the mouth (diagnosed by palpation &amp;/or radiography)</b>		
64	<b>Compound fracture of the lower jaw from a loose horse treading on a trailing rein or from a fallen rider hanging on to the rein</b>		
65	<b>Star fracture of the bars of the mouth followed by death of bone and sequestrum formation</b>		
66	<b>Amputation of the tongue, partial amputation, or deep scarring</b>		

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<b>OTHER PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE MOUTH IN PARTICULAR</b>			
67	Hates the bit, chomping, chewing or clenching the bit, grinding the teeth (bruxism), constant fussing with the bit, 'busy mouth,' evading contact		
68	Tongue lolling, tongue protrusion at exercise and sometimes (more rarely) at rest. At exercise, often associated with 'tongue-over-bit'		
69	Pulling on the bit, 'hard-mouthed,' 'spoiled mouth,' especially when heading home, pounds of rein pressure needed rather than ounces		
70	Salivates excessively because of counter-productive stimulation of digestive responses. Froths at mouth, drooling and slobbering		
<b>PROBLEMS THAT INTERFERE ESPECIALLY WITH A HORSE'S STRIDE</b>			
71	Stiff-necked, 'lock jawed,' reluctant to flex at the poll, will not 'relax' or 'flex' the jaw' (i.e. open the mouth, something it should not do anyway)		
72	Stiff or choppy stride ('bridle lameness'). Short stride giving slower speed		
73	Incoordination. The bit can cause signs that are easily mistaken for equine protozoal myelitis (EPM)		
74	Tilts head at exercise or refuses to keep head facing the line of travel. Accompanied by twisting of neck		
75	<b>Stumbling, often accompanied by sluggishness &amp; loss of interest in work</b>		
76	<b>Lacking in courage or confidence, not 'forward', refuses at jumps, lacking hind-end impulsion</b>		
77	<b>Heavy on the forehand, leaning on the bit, low-headed</b>		
78	<b>Difficult to steer in one or both directions or to travel straight, 'lugging,' 'bearing,' 'pulling in' or 'pulling out,' 'lugs on the bit'</b>		
79	<b>Fatigue &amp;/or airway obstruction at speed leading to a fall that results in a broken leg (Thoroughbred racehorses in particular)</b>		
80	<b>Breakdowns (from premature fatigue triggered by bit-induced shortage of breath)</b>		
81	Jigging, prancing, and 'rushing' when required to walk		
82	Refusal or difficulty in reining-back. Inability to rein-back in a straight line		
83	Interfering' with hind hoof (hitting front hoof with hind hoof on same side)		
84	Inverted frame (high head carriage, hollow back), 'strung-out'		
85	Pig-rooting,' 'gagging,' 'yawing,' diving with head or suddenly extending head forwards and snatching the reins out of the riders hands, 'yanking'		
86	Tying-up (muscle cramps, myoglobinuria, exertional rhabdomyolysis); thought to be caused in some horses by nervousness & stress		
87	Tail swishing or wringing ('flashing'), particularly when asked to canter or rein-back. Alternatively, tail clamping (sign of a rigid spine)		
88	Refusal or reluctance to change leads or to lead on one particular leg		
89	Dragging toes of hind feet, 'toe-scutting'		
90	Reluctance to maintain canter		
91	False collection (from bit pressure rather than from hind-end impulsion) producing muscle cramps in jaw, neck, shoulder, back and quarters		
<b>CAUSES OF SUDDEN DEATH</b>			
92	<b>A rearing episode can lead to a horse flipping over backwards and fracturing the base of its skull or breaking its back</b>		
93	<b>A severe episode of pulmonary bleeding can cause fatal asphyxiation</b>		
94	<b>Bit-induced partial asphyxia=premature fatigue in a racehorse=a fall=fracture of a long bone necessitating euthanasia</b>		
95	<b>Fatigue from the same cause can lead to a 'false step,' career-ending breakdown, and euthanasia</b>		

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<b>EFFECT OF ALL OF THE ABOVE ON THE RIDER</b>			
96	Self-evaluation of riding skills as 'poor' when, in fact, horsemen <b>should</b> be blaming their 'tools' (i.e. the bit or bits)		
97	Development of a sense of frustration with apparent inability to master the art of equitation		
98	A burgeoning annoyance bordering on anger with the horse		
99	An increasing reluctance to exercise the horse on a regular basis and the generation of displacement activities (excuses)		
100	A loss of that sense of harmony between horse and rider that is so critical to all horsemanship		
101	Riding ceases to give the rider (or the horse) pleasure		
102	Loss of confidence, fear of riding, and a decision to give up riding altogether		
103	Decision to sell or breed from a horse that appears to have incurable problems and to buy another for riding		
104	Economic embarrassment from doomed attempts to treat problems by means other than by removal of their cause, the only logical treatment		
105	<b>Personal injury (anything from fractured collar bones to sudden death)</b>		

**NOTES** (including any additional signs): For example have ulcers on the gums or tongue been a problem?

To date there is no evidence to link wind-sucking or crib-biting as problems that might be caused by the bit but it would be worth noting the occurrence of such items in case a pattern of correlation could be demonstrated. The same applies to the problem of self-mutilation in the stall.

**Date questionnaire completed:**

**Time interval since Bitless Bridle first used:**

(NB: Repeat questionnaires are extremely valuable. For example, a questionnaire completed after, say, the first two weeks of using the bridle, might be followed by another after six or twelve months)

**SEQUENCE OF APPEARANCE OF THE PROBLEMS LISTED ABOVE:** Information of special interest is the order in which problems occurred over a period of time. If possible, assign an approximate time-line chronology (1st, 2nd, 3rd etc) against the problems you have noted.

If the horse already had a collection of behavioural problems at the time of purchase, these should be flagged. If after you have observed the horse for a time two signs appeared simultaneously, these might be marked with an equal sign.

**SEQUENCE OF PROBLEM RESOLUTION:** It would also be of interest to know in which order the problems disappeared on using the Bitless Bridle.

**Owner's name:**

**Address:**

**Tel #:**

**E-mail address:**

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[Questionnaires may be completed by computer and returned to drcook@bitlessbridle.com](mailto:drcook@bitlessbridle.com)

or printed out, completed by hand, and posted to:

**Dr. Robert Cook**

**206, Birch Run Road, Chestertown, MD 21620, USA**

**Tel: (410) 778 9005.**

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

Major problems with bit:
Total number of problems when bitted: .....
Number of problems solved after using BB for ..... months/years = ..... (.....%)
Number of problems remaining after BB used for ..... months/years = ..... (.....%)
Number of problems that developed after using BB that were not present before .....

NOTES:
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RECOMMENDATIONS:
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