

Use Yarn for Gentler Hands

By Cindy Hale

Are you too busy with your hands? Do you resort to grabbing the reins in an effort to force your horse on the bit? Here's an exercise to help you develop a more sympathetic feel of your horse's mouth. All you'll need is some four-ply yarn.

First, make a pair of reins from a strand of the yarn. Tie each end of the yarn securely to the rings of your horse's bit. Next, tie your leather reins in a knot. They should be short enough so that the knot rests on your horse's neck approximately where a martingale strap would sit. Now, hold the yarn "reins" in your hands and begin to ride. See how well you can communicate with your horse's mouth using only the tension that the yarn will allow. If you snatch and yank on the reins, you'll break the yarn. That's fine. Grab your knotted leather reins, settle down, and bring on some more yarn!

Of course, if your horse is a rambunctious puller, you'll go through an entire skein of yarn in minutes. In that case, borrow a more suitable horse. This is an exercise for your benefit so that you can experience a kinder, gentler pair of hands.