

## CHAPTER 2. HARNESSING AND TRAINING

### 2.1 HARNESSING OF DRAUGHT CATTLE

#### 2.1.5 THE HEAD HARNESS FOR DRAUGHT CATTLE

##### INTRODUCTION

Animals tend to follow their heads when moving and advantage is taken of this when fitting head harnesses to steer them. It is common practice in some regions, for one person to lead the animals whilst a second person controls the implement. A third person may also walk alongside, encouraging the animals to pull. Clearly there are many advantages if a single person behind the implement can carry out all these functions.

Although well trained and experienced animals can often be steered only through voice commands (Fig.1), younger animals must be controlled by some system of reins which points their heads in the direction where they are required to go.



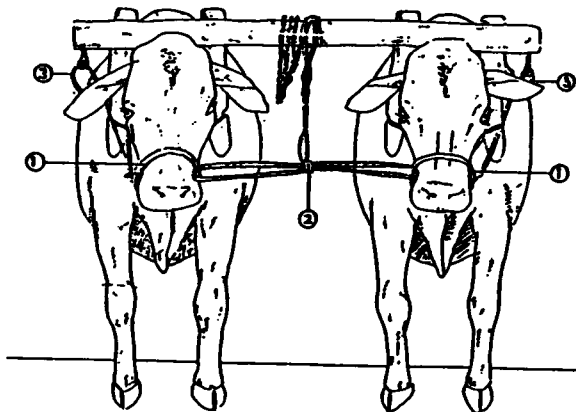
*Fig. 1 A well trained pair of animals being controlled entirely by voice commands and encouraged with a whip.*

*Photo: J.E.Ashburner*

The head harness described here, is normally preferred as it causes no injury to the nose or ears of the animal. Less preferred, alternative systems using nose rings, nose ropes or ear reins are described separately in Module 2.1.7. Whichever system is adopted, the steering reins should pass through eyes on the yoke to avoid them tangling with the animal's feet (see Module 2.1.2).

**THE HEAD HARNESS**

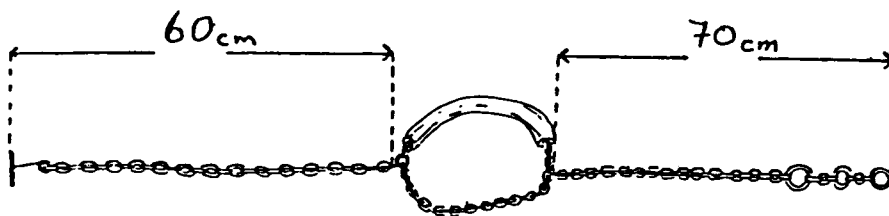
A convenient type of head harness is illustrated below (Fig.2).



*Fig. 2 The head harness consists of the halter (1), the coupling (2) and the steering rope (3).*

*Source: AETC, 1986*

The halter can be made from chain for fully grown animals whereas a leather halter is better for younger cattle. The chain halter should be made up by the blacksmith from a length of some 2 metres of light chain. Approximate dimensions are shown below (Fig.3). The chain is passed through a short length of hose-pipe to prevent rubbing across the bridge of the animal's nose, leaving enough slack to pass three fingers underneath when fitted. The chain is attached behind the animal's ears, with the nose loop high enough so that the nostrils are not restricted.

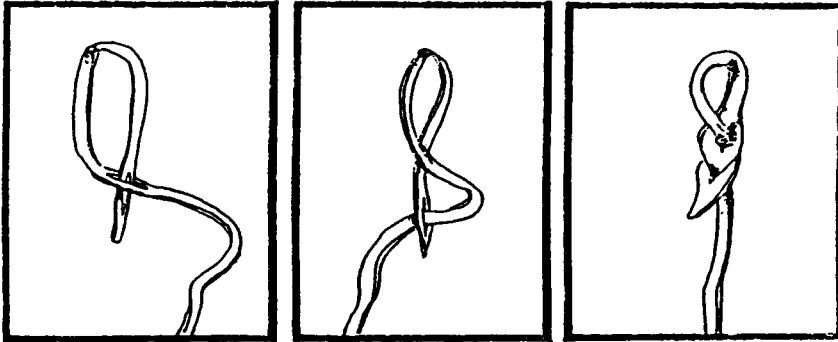


*Fig. 3 Approximate dimensions for making a chain halter from a length of about 2 metres of light chain.*

*Source: AETC, 1986*

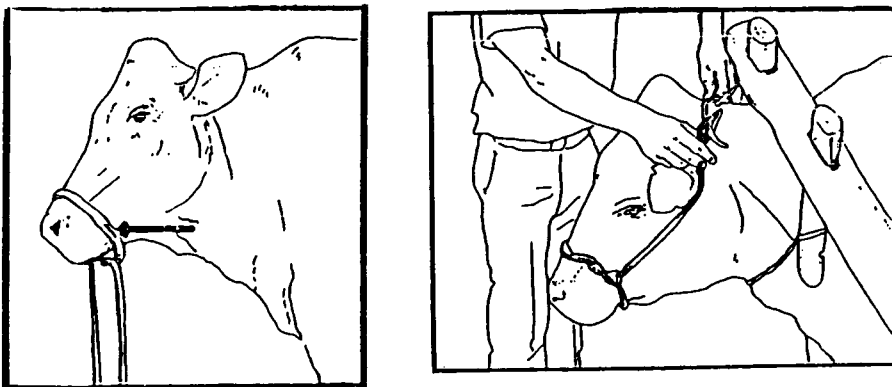
**MAKING A LEATHER HALTER**

This is made from a strip of leather about 230 cm long. Make two short cuts at one end and form an eye as shown (Fig.4).



*Fig. 4 To make the loop in the halter, pass the end through the second cut and then the whole strap through the first cut.*  
Source: AETC, 1986

Now take the centre of the strap and make slits to fit it over the animal's nose. Twist the ends around the top of the nose loop and pass them through the slits from the inside. Tie a simple knot so that the ends of the strap are held in position for the top loop which is held behind the ears. It should be loose enough to slide three fingers underneath and must not restrict the animal's nostrils (Fig.5).



*Fig. 5 Position for making the slits for the nose loop (left) and the finished halter being fitted (right).*  
Source: AETC, 1986

### FIXING THE COUPLING

The animals will now need to be yoked together and the coupling attached.

The coupling is tied with a length of about 4 metres of light cord or strap.

Pass it through the two halter nose loops so that it is long enough for the animals to look straight ahead.

Secure the length with knots made from the two ends, adjusting it to the correct length (Fig.6).

Tie the remaining ends over the yoke so they don't drag on the ground (Fig.1).

### ATTACHING THE STEERING ROPE

The steering rope consists of a 13 metre length of light rope (8 or 10 mm) or strap

It is attached to the outside of the halters (Fig.7).

The ends pass through a loop fixed into the yoke.

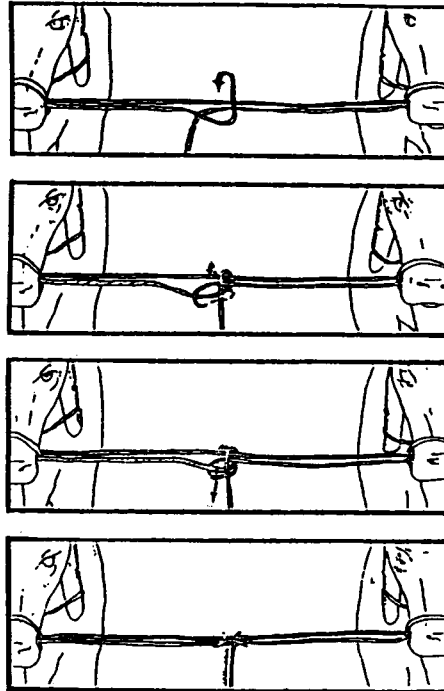


Fig. 6 The four stages to tie the knot for the coupling.  
Source: AETC; 1986

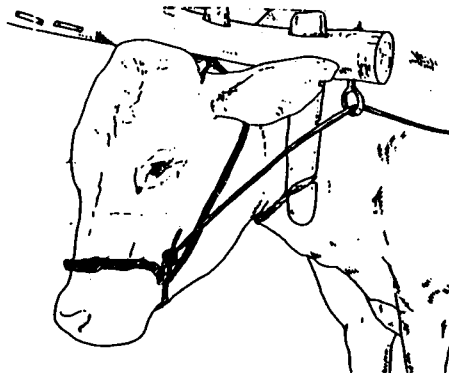


Fig. 7 The steering rope tied to the halter and passing through a ring in the yoke.

Source: AETC, 1986