

CHAPTER 2. HARNESSING AND TRAINING

2.1 HARNESSING OF DRAUGHT CATTLE

2.1.7 USE OF NOSE RINGS, NOSE ROPES AND EAR REINS

INTRODUCTION

The use of the halter is described in **Module 2.1.5** and has the advantage of avoiding the risk of injuring the nose or ears of the animal. However when handled with care, the use of nose rings, nose ropes or steering ropes attached to the animals ears can give more positive control. In regions where their use is traditionally accepted, these methods may also lead to an increased confidence of the farmers who have recently adopted the use of draught animal power. It must be realised that placing the nose ring is a distressing experience for the animal and is probably best avoided if possible.

NOSE ROPES AND NOSE RINGS

Nose ropes are sometimes tied from behind the animal's head, particularly in East Africa. They are made from a tied cord, preferably nylon to prevent it rotting. The cords need to be checked frequently for tightness, to prevent them cutting into the nose and causing injury and infection.

The use of a metal ring made by the local blacksmith is common in West Africa. The ring is riveted on one side and an inset screw, carefully fitted, secures the ring in place (**Fig.1**).

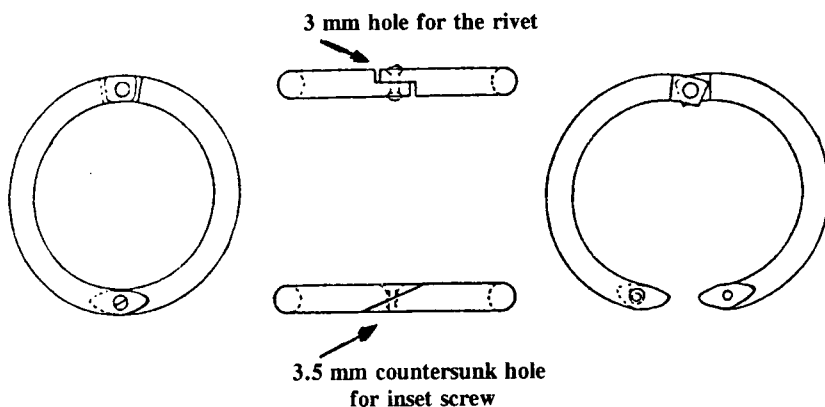


Fig. 1 Dimensions for making a nose ring. All rough edges must be removed to avoid injury to the animal.
Source: Mignolet & Lecca, 1986

BRINGING THE ANIMAL TO THE GROUND

The animal must be brought to the ground and restrained for nose punching. To do this without injuring the animal, it is preferable to employ the technique known as "casting" (Fig.2).

Firstly, catch the animal by a rear leg using a stick and rope loop as shown in Fig.2 of Module 2.2.1. Loop a second rope around the horns and tighten the noose. Now loop a third rope over the horns. Bring the free end of this rope back to the withers and cinch (loop) it around the animal's girth. Again pass the free end further back and cinch it a second time around the loins. Now gently pull the free end of the rope from the rear whilst the animal is held from the front; this exerts pressure around the body and the animal calmly sinks to the ground.

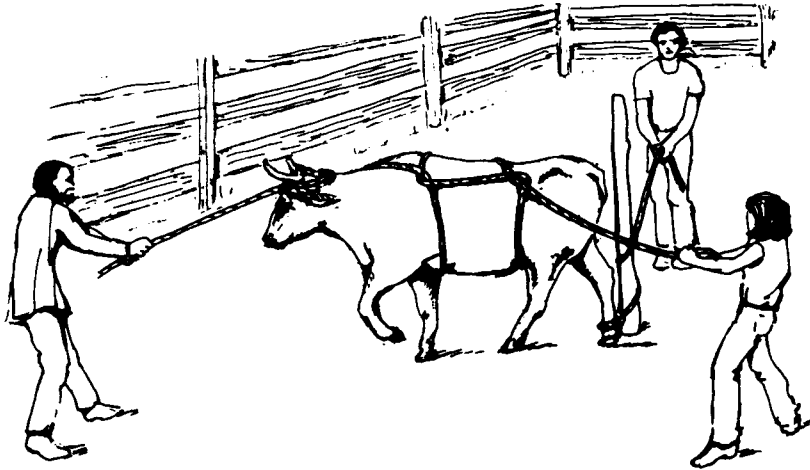


Fig. 2 Bringing the animal to the ground ready for nose punching.

Source: Peter Watson, 1983

NOSE PUNCHING

Make a long sharp spike from a piece of hard wood, making sure it is smooth and free from splinters. Disinfect the spike and the interior of the nasal passage of the animal. Pierce the nasal passage with the spike, just below the nose cartilage, where the skin is soft. Carefully slide the nose ring into place and fit the inset screw to secure it. Tie a cord of about 150 cm onto the ring and wrap it around the horns, making sure that it does not interfere with the eyes of the animal (Fig.3).



Fig. 3 The nose ring in place, the cord should be attached to the horns so not to interfere when the animal feeds. Drawing: Beccaloni, 1993

REINS ATTACHED TO THE EARS

It is the custom in some regions, to attach the steering reins to the horns of the animal and loop them around the ears. Two methods to achieve this are shown below (Fig.6).

Although positive control is possible when the reins are carefully attached, the loops tend to slip. In addition, continuous use of this reining system can lead to sores at the base of the ears. For these reasons, the method is not recommended in this course.

3 2.1.7 Nose rings, ropes & ear reins

Once the nose ring is introduced, it may be used for steering pairs of oxen or for single animals (Fig.4).

In East Africa, particularly Uganda, it is the practice to punch the nose through the lower part of the nose cartilage. In this case, a special nose punching tool is required and the injury, being much more severe, must be very carefully treated with anti-septics until fully healed.



Fig. 4 Using a nose ring on a single ox. Source: Starkey, 1989

A further inconvenience is that the animals' heads are only pulled to one side. The use of a nose ring or halter can solve this problem, if these are attached by a coupling rope as already illustrated in **FIG.2** of **Module 2.1.5**. This method will assist in directing both the two animals at the same time.

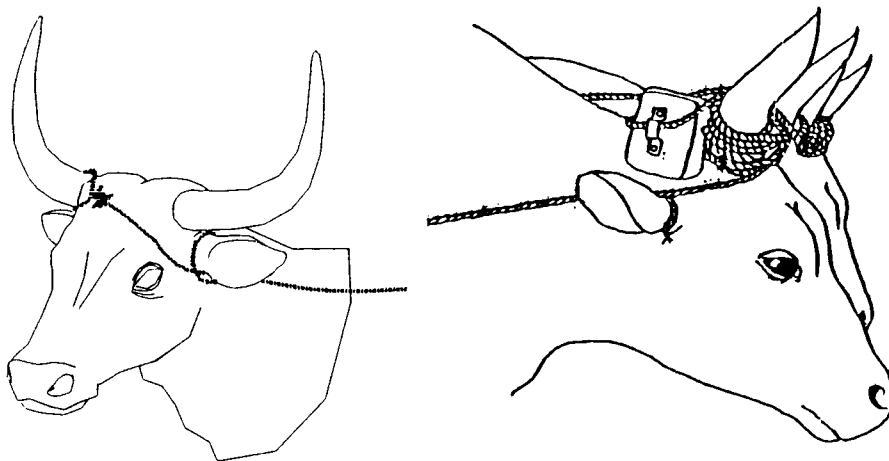


Fig. 5 Two methods for attaching the reins to the animal's ears. Note that a coupling rope and halter should also be attached to coordinate the movement of the animals.

Source: Starkey, 1989

CONCLUSION

This Module has presented two additional methods for controlling work oxen through the use of nose rings or ear reins. Although both methods are used in some countries, it is strongly recommended that some of the more gentle methods be attempted first, particularly when starting to work with younger animals. These methods include the use of the halter as already recommended in **Modules 2.1.4, 2.1.5 and 2.1.6**. Indeed no head restraining system at all has proved to be necessary with well trained animals as indicated by many of this Training Manual's illustrations (for example see **Figs.1** of **Modules 2.1.3 and 2.1.5**).