

## CHAPTER 2. HARNESSING AND TRAINING

### 2.3 HARNESSING OF DONKEYS

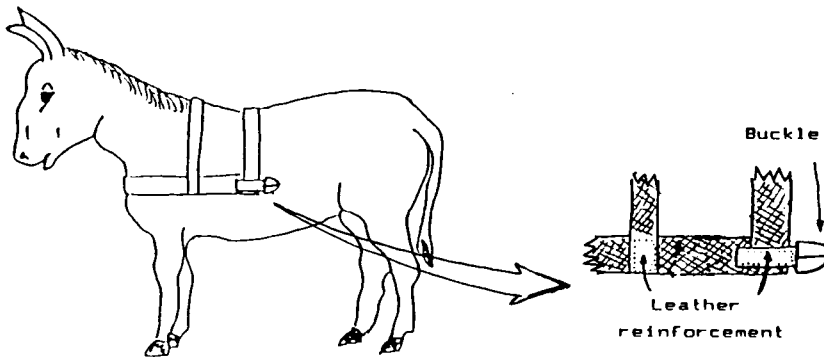
#### 2.3.1 TYPES OF DONKEY HARNESS FOR PULLING IMPLEMENTS

##### INTRODUCTION

Due to the anatomy of the donkey, it is generally accepted that a harness consisting of a breast strap or a collar is superior to the adaptation of an ox yoke. Some of the designs which have been adopted in other countries, particularly Botswana, will be described in this Module. They may be used for pulling implements, but not for operating carts as they provide no braking facility.

##### THE WEBBING BREAST STRAP

This may be made from strips of webbing which are sewn to fit the donkey as shown (Fig.1). It may also be made from leather to a similar design, although costs will be higher.



*Fig. 1 Design for a webbing breast strap with straps for the shoulders and back, as made by artisans in Botswana.*  
Source: FMDU, 1987

The webbing required measures approximately as follows:

- a length of 120 cm with a width of 7.5 cm for the breast strap
- a length of 60 cm with a width of 5 cm for the back strap
- a length of 60 cm with a width of 5 cm for the shoulder strap

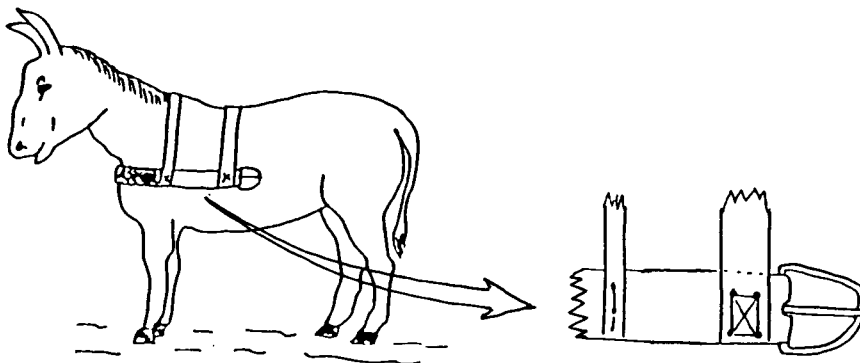
Adjust the straps to fit the donkey, sew over leather reinforcements patches and attach the buckle as shown.

### BREAST STRAP MADE FROM AN OLD CAR TYRE

A harness may also be made to the same design, using an old car tyre, wrapped with padding material for comfort and also to absorb the animals perspiration (Fig.2). The material used is as follows:

- a strip about 105 cm long and 6 cm wide is cut from the tread of the tyre. This is used for the breast strap.
- a strip about 65 cm long and 5 cm wide is cut from the tyre casing. This is used for the back strap.
- a strip about 65 cm long and 5 cm wide is also cut from the tyre casing. This will make the shoulder strap.

The joints should be stitched using a thin, soft wire and the buckles are attached as shown. Care must be taken to ensure the best fit over the animal. Once the harness is stitched, wrap the breast strap with sacking or heavy cloth for padding.



*Fig. 2 Design for a breast strap harness made from an old car tyre as used in Botswana.*

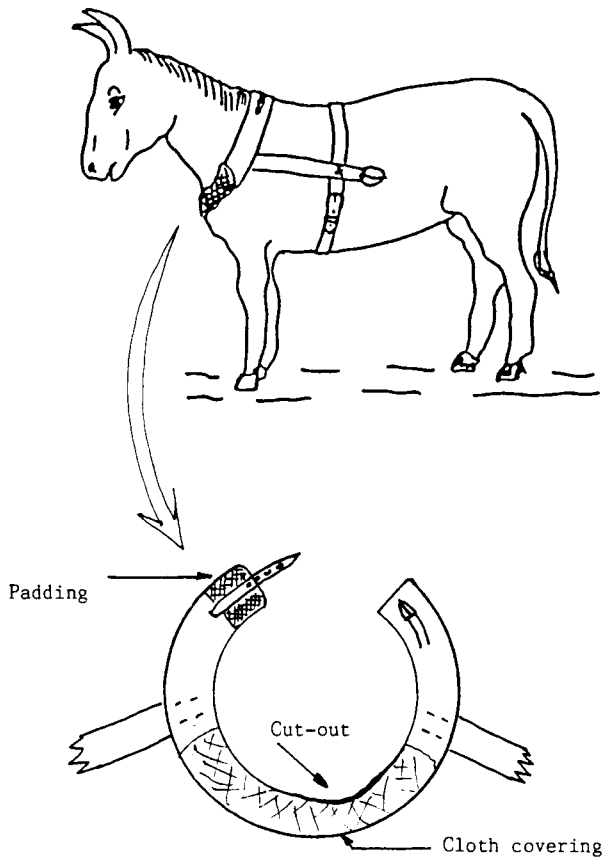
*Source: FMDU, 1987*

**COLLAR HARNESS MADE FROM AN OLD CAR TYRE**

The collar is made by cutting the sidewall of an old car tyre to the desired length - it should just fail to overlap over the shoulders. The bottom part of the collar should be cut as shown so as to allow more room for the animal's throat (Fig.3).

The straps are made from strips cut from the tyre casing and stitched together with thin, soft wire. Care is need to attach the collar to the pull straps so that it does not twist when the animal is pulling an implement.

Buckles are fitted for the traces and also to attach the girth strap. The collar should then be padded with heavy cloth or sack-  
ing.

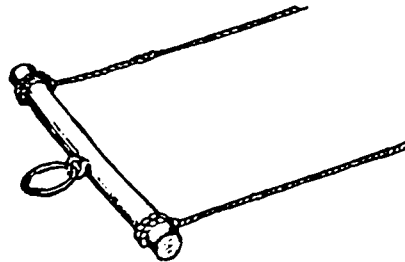


*Fig. 3 A collar harness made from the sidewall of an old car tyre. Note the strip cut from the tyre for comfort.*

*Source: FMDU, 1987*

**HITCHING SINGLE ANIMALS OR A PAIR**

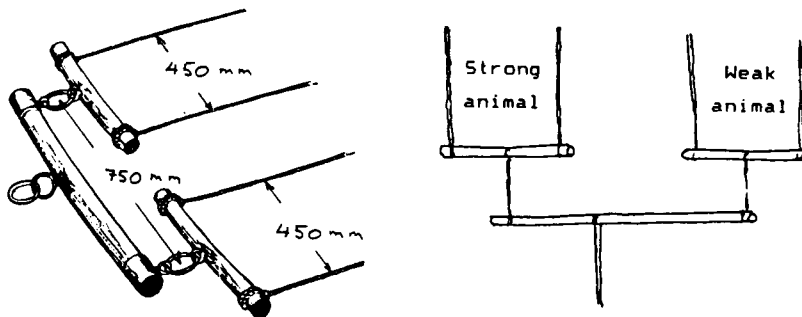
Each animal is normally hitched to the implement through a crossbar known as the "swingletree". This is made from a short log about 50 cm long with rings fitted to attach the pull chains. If the traces are made from rope, notches should be cut in the swingletree so they cannot slip off (Fig.4).



*Fig. 4 The swingletree used to attach the traces from each animal. Source: Hopfen, 1989*

Donkeys will frequently be used in pairs, for which an additional crossbeam called the "evener" is made in a similar manner. The evener is longer, and may be made in various lengths if each animal will walk along a separate row. The evener is attached close behind the two swingletrees.

The implement is normally pulled from the centre, but if one animal is stronger than the other, the trek chain should be attached closer to the side of the stronger animal to compensate (Fig.5).



*Fig. 5 Suggested sizes for the swingletrees and evener to hitch together a pair of donkeys (left); compensating for a weaker animal (right)*

*Sources: Hopfen, 1969 & FMDU, 1987*