

MANOLO MENDEZ DRESSAGE

In-Hand FAQs



Why Bamboo?

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Why use bamboo?

Manolo Mendez uses bamboo as an extension of his hand, and to assist in his in-hand and ridden work. He uses it to create posture, regulate gait and speed, create, enhance

or rehabilitate straightness, regularity and symmetry. He uses bamboo to work on bend, lateral movements, suspension, straightness in transitions and halts, and more.

Bamboo is **never used to hit** the horse. It is used to **touch** the horse. The handler has to be very careful how they touch the horse on its lower extremities (below the carpus and hock) where there are bones, tendons and ligaments but no muscle mass. Hitting a horse on a bony area is painful and we do not want to cause pain to the horse. The purpose of the bamboo is to **influence, guide** and **encourage** the horse, not punish him.

“ Our success in-hand depends greatly on our ability to pay close attention to the horse’s body, his expressions and movements, and how he responds to our motions, our requests.” Manolo Mendez “Some Thoughts on In-Hand Work”

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How to Select Bamboo

Length

Manolo uses bamboos of different length for different purposes, anywhere from 4,6,8 and 12 feet. Why? Because sometimes the handler may ask the horse to travel on a wide arc around them or on a straight line. A longer bamboo allows the handler to, for example, keep the horse active from a distance. If the handler want to work closely to the horse, a shorter bamboo allows them to tap the hind or front legs without constantly having to adjust the bamboo because of its cumbersome length.

Circumference

The bamboo width should be about the size of an index finger. It should be long, thin and taper towards the top. A long bamboo will be slightly thicker but it wont be requiring as much dexterity as a shorter bamboo allows.

Straight and Dry

Bamboos should be straight. Ideal is a bamboo with segments of equal length and knuckles that have been smoothed. You do not want any asperities to catch on the horse's body. You can use garden shears to remove offshoots and sand the knuckles and tip to make your bamboo friendly.

Finally and most importantly, only use completely **DRY** bamboo. Green bamboo is heavy, and it will sting and hurt the horse as a whip would. For light and dry bamboo, bundle green bamboos together so they are straight and hang them to dry for several months in a dry place. You can place a weight at the bottom to ensure they straighten.

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A DRY bamboo make an impressive noise and it would be easy to think it is harsh. It is not. Once it is accustomed to it, a process that should take a few minutes, the horse will show no fear or concern over it IF the handler is introducing the horse to it correctly.

Please use common sense, work calmly and progressively, and do not forget to praise the horse for the smallest try.

“Remember, forcing the horse destroys its desire to work and his trust and confidence in himself and in us. Respect your horse, be kind and lead by example.

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