

# Understanding Gear Changes by RACINGTRADES.COM

UNDERSTANDING GEAR CHANGES, THE REASONS THEY ARE USED AND HOW THEY CAN BE USED FOR FORM STUDENTS TO FIND WINNERS.

TERMINOLOGIES ARE GEARED TOWARDS AUSTRALIAN RACING IN CERTAIN AREAS, SOME GEARS AND MEDICINES USED IN OTHER RACING JURISDICTIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED. WE WILL ENDEAVOUR TO ADD TO THESE SOON WITH THOSE NOT ALREADY ADDED.

## **BAR PLATES**

This is another problem solving shoe that is usually used to protect a bruised or damaged area of the hoof. Punters should be wary of these horses on hard ground. The addition of bar plates to a horse after a surprise failure is a guide that this particular horse is having problems with its feet, and may improve dramatically.

## **BARRIER BLANKET**

A heavy duty blanket applied to horses who resent standing in starting stalls. Invented by the Horse Whisperer, Monty Roberts. The idea is to protect the flanks of the horse from the natural fear of being touched in that region by the sides of the stalls. The blanket is clear of the saddle and is attached to the back of the stalls. It slides off when the horse jumps. Some pro punters believe a horse that wears a barrier blanket more than often missed the start by a short margin. There is no conclusive evidence of this.

## **BITS ON**

A general term used in Victoria, Tasmania and SA. It means that the trainer has advised of a change of bit. The horse could be hanging, lugging or over-racing.

## **BLINKERS FIRST TIME**

A key factor for punters to follow. Horses can improve dramatically with blinkers first time. Horses will race straight and keenly. Unfortunately, the risk is that the horse will over-race. Follow the leading stables as the top trainers seem to know when blinkers are best applied. Some young, green horses will improve dramatically when blinkers go on first time. Note that Qld stewards do not announce blinkers first time – they announce only that blinkers are on, not specifically first time.

## **BLINKERS ON/AGAIN**

Apart from Queensland, this means the blinkers had previously been used on this horse and are going back on. The addition of blinkers can cause horses to over-race and this is why they were removed in the first place. Horses that have blinkers going back on are often horses that are inconsistent or struggling for form.

## **BLINKERS OFF**

The removal of blinkers usually means that a horse has either over-raced in them or shown a lack of racing interest in them. Sometimes, a horse will be increasing in distance, so trainers will remove the blinkers to allow the horse to relax, especially if it is suspect at the distance. Sometimes, horses get used to the blinkers and trainers will remove them in a hope that the horse will spark up and show some keenness to race again.

## **CHEEKERS**

There are two types - one an addition to the bit to keep the tongue high and the other a disk-like piece of leather/plastic on each end of the bit, outside the mouth of the horse. Used to lift the bit in the mouth and give the jockey more control.

## **CONCUSSION PLATES/SHOCK SHOD SHOES**

These racing plates are for horses that are jarring up on firm ground. The addition of these plates after a failure means that the run can often be forgiven. Punters should be wary of these horses on firm ground. These shoes can be used as a temporary measure.

## **GELDED**

NSW stewards make reference to this because of popular demand. It means the horse has been gelded since it last race. This can be a valuable guide for punters who know that a particular horse had ability but wasn't genuine or his performances were not a reflection of its ability. Remember, Kingston Town ran last as

a 2YO as a colt, returned as a gelding at three to become a champion.

### **GLUE ON SHOES**

Not that common, but essentially for horses with thin walled or soft hooves. The glue on shoe means the farrier doesn't require the use of nails on the hoof. The risk is these shoes can sometimes remove during then race. The hint for the punter is that this horse is having problems with its feet - be very wary on firm ground.

### **LUGGING BIT**

A self-explanatory reference. Horses who hang out or in require these bits. Horses can often improve in form, but these bits can be harsh on some horses who will fight or resent them.

### **NORTON BIT**

A "harsh" bit that lifts the bit higher in the mouth. It can be used on horses that fight the jockey. A bit that is used to stop horses from pulling.

### **NOSEROLL**

This is the same as a Shadow Roll – a sheepskin covering across the nose that is mainly used to make a horse lower its head so it can see. Generally, horses that race with their heads high are harder to control and rarely relax in their races. Trainers like to get the head down, especially with stayers. This gear is common in Europe. Northerly is an exception to the rule – a champion horse with a high head carriage.

### **NOSEBAND**

Used on the gear to keep a horse's mouth shut. The purpose is to give the jockey more control and stop the horse from over-racing or getting its head up. Nosebands are often used on horses with a breathing problem.

### **ONE-EYED BLINKER**

The use of a one-eyed blinker is primarily to stop a horse from hanging. For example, horses that hang to the left (near side) require a one-eyed blinker with the left cup only. The extra vision on the right side will distract the horse and sometimes allow him run straight. That's the theory. Northerly is a well known horse that, at one time, wore a one-eyed blinker.

### **PACIFIERS ON**

Pacifier is a hood with a mesh covering over the eyes. The idea is to dull the vision of the horse and protect the eyes from flying clods. Pacifiers are not the "fad" gear change they were a few years ago. Pacifiers can be applied for a number of reasons. A horse that over-races can settle with the addition of pacifiers. Horses that are field shy or have a distinct dislike for dirt and clods being through back into their faces can benefit from pacifiers. In some states, pacifiers cannot be used on tracks rated slow or worse. Pacifiers can be worn with blinkers.

### **RING BIT**

A type of lugging bit used to give jockeys that ability to control horses that can lock their jaw and take control.

### **SHADOW ROLL**

The same as a noseroll - a sheepskin covering across the nose. Mainly used to make a horse lower its head so it can see. Generally, horses that race with their heads high are harder to control and rarely relax in their races. Trainers like to get the head down, especially with stayers. This gear is common in Europe. Northerly is an exception to the rule – a champion horse with a high head carriage.

### **SHOCK SHOD SHOES/CONCUSSION PLATES**

These racing plates are for horses that are jarring up on firm ground. The addition of these plates after a failure means that the run can often be forgiven. Punters should be wary of these horses on firm ground. These shoes Can be used as a temporary measure.

### **TONGUE TIE**

The tongue tie is very common. The addition of a tongue tie is worth following, especially for a horse that failed inexplicably at its previous start. The failure could be down to the horse getting its tongue over the bit and cutting of the air ways, choking down. Some horses detest having their tongues tied down, so other methods are used, such as tongue control bits.

### **TONGUE CONTROL BIT**

These bits are less invasive as a tongue tie. This bit presses down on the tongue with the purpose of stopping a horse from getting its tongue over the bit. They may not be as effective as a tongue tie as some clever horses can still get their tongues into the wrong position.

### **WINKERS**

Winkers are a new addition to racing gear. They were used a lot in New Zealand. Winkers are a long strip of sheep skin set vertically on the bridle behind each eye. They are used to block the sight behind the eye like a blinker but allow a broader vision. They are often added to a horse who doesn't appreciate blinkers or one

that has had blinkers on for some time but needs a change.

## **VISOR**

Essentially a blinker with some holes cut in the sides to allow some vision for the horse to see.