

TAWS - Workshop at Silsoe Research Institute

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Theme 4: Harnessing and yoking
German harnesses for oxen

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The use of animals for working or traction purposes has a long history - not only in Europe, but world-wide.

In almost every part of the world there was, and in many places still is, the use of animals for work an existential necessity.

In this respect, in all these places the technique of using animals for work and its harnessing underlies a process of an initial invention and fabrication and further evolution as a continuing process.

Happened so - all around the world.

In Europe, in Germany especially, up to the 1960s, the use of animals for work and traction was popular and common and an essential part of agricultural work.

From 1880 to the 1930s, **more than two million cows or oxen** were used as working animals.

Up to this time many investigations for better and more effective harnessing were made to perfect these harnessing-techniques - the already mentioned "evolution".

In 1936, "**Heinrich Steinmetz**" published his book "**Cow-harnessing in Germany**". It was a documentation of the current situation of that time, and a promotion for the "**Adjustable 3 - collar - pad**", which "Heinrich Steinmetz" developed.

Not at first, concerns of animal welfare intended him, even if this is a most relevant argument for this type of harnessing, in past as well as today.

The main aspects was to advance the situation of using cattle for work, up to a most effective manner.

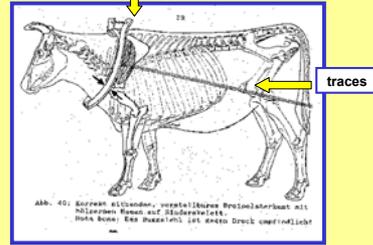
The main idea was to not use withers or head as a towing point, because this is a constraint for cow or oxen while in movement.

So Heinrich Steinmetz (and others) developed a system of harnessing, where the towing point lies on the shoulder, with the effect, that cow or ox can move absolute freely.

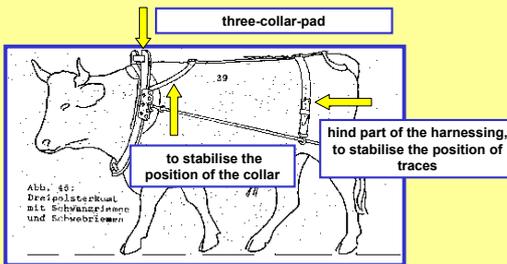
This was much more effective and it is animal-friendly too.

Harnessing of cattle, the "perfect fit"
- how the "three-collar-pad" works.

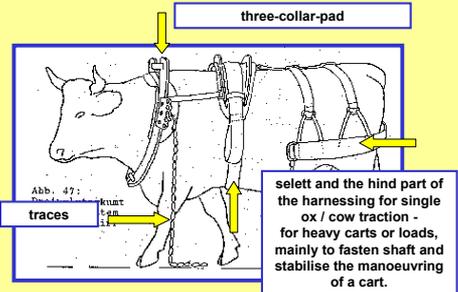
three-collar-pad, the traction-point is lying on the shoulder, animal can move absolutely free.



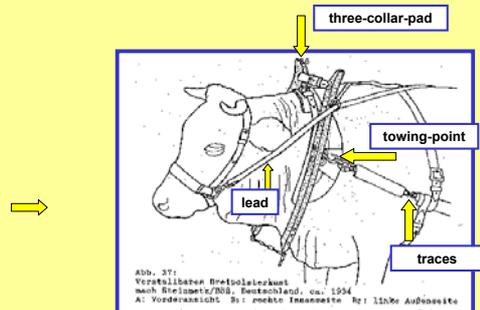
Harnessing of cattle, the "perfect fit"
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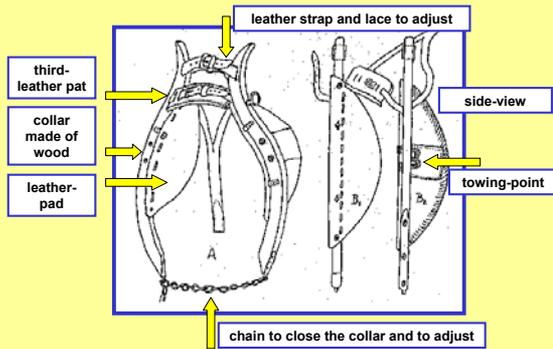
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The "three-collar-pad"



The "three-collar-pad"



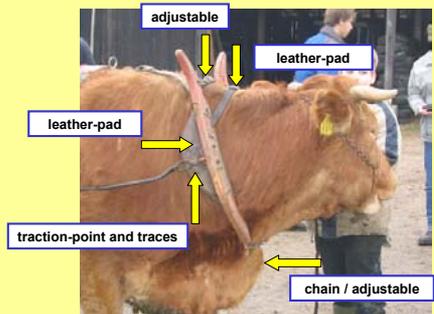
a similar technique in former times



a similar technique in former times



The "three-collar-pad" - nowadays used in Germany (Helferskirchen 2004)



Here, at this point, you only can adjust the collar. Making it more tight or wider, causes a change of the position of the leather-pads, so that it comes to lie right on the shoulder. That makes the collar fit for animals of different sizes. This is not a traction-point !!

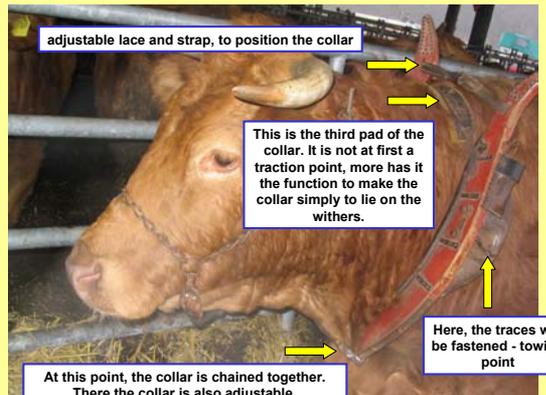


adjustable lace and strap, to position the collar

This is the third pad of the collar. It is not at first a traction point, more has it the function to make the collar simply to lie on the withers.

At this point, the collar is chained together. There the collar is also adjustable.

Here, the traces will be fastened - towing point



This leather girth belongs to the harnessing of a single ox or cow in traction. It is chained to the shaft, and keeps the cart away from the ox or cow in case of going a hanging road.

This girth around the body takes the shaft.

The traces - fastened at the collar.

