

Cowboy Arts & Gear Museum

2026 Bit & Reins Contest

Rules and Guidelines

The 2026 Bit & Reins Contest makers have the first right of refusal to enter the 2026 contest. If a maker forfeits their spot, the first completed application including received payment will be accepted and will fill the vacant spot. All bit and rawhide maker bios and photos are to be uploaded with the 2026 entry form.

[LINK TO ENTRY FORM HERE](#)

The 2026 Gear Museum Contest will include:

- Bits: 20 Entries
 - Entry fee is \$250, split between museum and contest purse
- Rawhide Reins: 15 Entries
 - Entry fee is \$150, split between museum and contest purse

All bit and rawhide items will be professionally photographed for use on the website, auction, program, and all other media sources and outlets. Nicole Poyo Photography has graciously donated these photographs and continues to offer these professional images to the individual makers for their own marketing use for a nominal fee.

Makers will be responsible for the return shipping on any items that do not sell.

If you have questions about contest rules, please contact John Wright 775-340-0943.

Rules for the 2026 Bit Contest

This year's cheek style is the **Fresno** cheek piece. All bits will be individually marked with the Cowboy Arts & Gear Museum logo "CA". Makers are asked to mark their bit with their individual maker's mark.

Every maker will start with the same blank cheek piece and may design them in any manner they choose (inlay, overlay, steel engraved, etc.). Each maker can add or remove metal on the cheek to his or her liking but CANNOT change the traditional integrity of the cheek style. The mouthpiece styles will be chosen by the maker. Maker may add rein chains if they choose. All bits will be capped at \$2,500.00 for initial pricing. In the Museum's experience, bits priced below the \$2,500.00 threshold are the first to be bid on and generally exceed the maximum threshold. **Contest entries must be postmarked by November 3, 2025!**

Rules for the 2026 Rawhide Reins Contest

The 2026 rein requirements are as follows:

- Rein body will be 12 plait x 42" long with a 16 plait romal. Button pattern must consist of two long buttons per side or more, small buttons will be makers discretion. Color or color combination will be the maker's choice. The work needs to be functional.

All reins will require the makers individual mark on the popper. All professional reins will be capped at \$2,000.00 for initial pricing. **Contest entries must be postmarked by November 3, 2025. Any attempt to alter entries after they are received will result in that piece being pulled from the contest/auction and returned to the maker.**

Contest Judging

Bits are evaluated by three different judges that specialize in the horse industry. All judges' decisions are final.

Categories evaluated during judging: Balance, function, visual appeal, design/detail, and finish work. No rough or sharp edges, resemblance to traditional cheek style.

Rawhide reins are judged on uniformity, correct parameters, balance, and finish.

Auction

Bits and reins will be listed for sale at the price set by the maker and sold via online auction hosted by Western Trading Post. 20% of the sale proceeds will be given as a charitable donation to the Cowboy Arts & Gear Museum. This is 100% deductible as a 501(c)(3) donation.

ALL MAKERS: Please keep in mind this is a fundraiser for the Cowboy Arts & Gear Museum. We are a 501(c)(3) museum, and we provide this contest as a way to showcase makers and help launch or further their talents.

Added Money & Awards

J.M. Capriola Co. \$2500.00

Gallagher Livestock \$1000.00

Additional awards TBD