

**RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz** 

#### **ABC's of RFI for Hams**

Bob Brehm, AK6R Chief Engineer Palomar-Engineers.com

FLEX RADIO Hamvention 5/19/23 This presentation available on website Copyright 2013-2023 Palomar Engineers, Inc.



#### Palomar Engineers Short History

- Founded in 1965 by Jack Althouse, K6NY
- Reorganized in 2013 as RFI Solutions company
- **Objective:** Provide products that make radio communication more effective & enjoyable

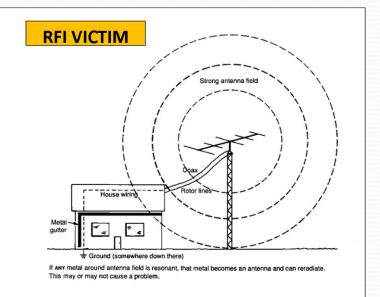
#### Product Line

- Ferrite Core Products
- Baluns, Ununs, Feedline Chokes & Coax Noise Filters
- Antenna Systems (OCF, End Fed, Loop, Terminated)
- RFI Solution Kits for Ham, Commercial, Household
- Kurt Sterba Books/Downloads
- **Distribution:** Ham Radio Outlet, Direct, eBay
- Markets: Consumer, Commercial, and Military

Let's talk about RFI

### Are you the **SOURCE** of RFI?

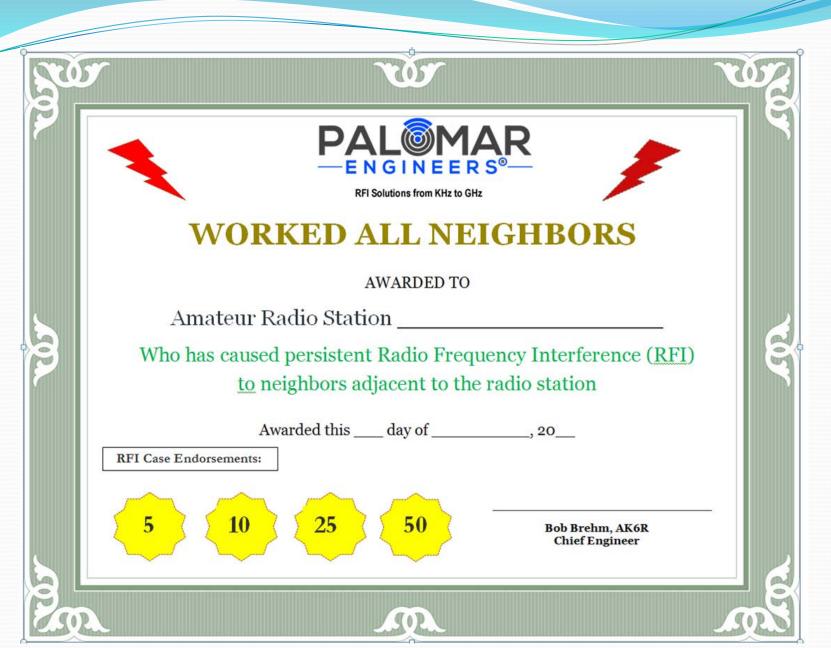




#### **IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT WITH THAT BIG ANTENNA!**

Maybe you got an award!

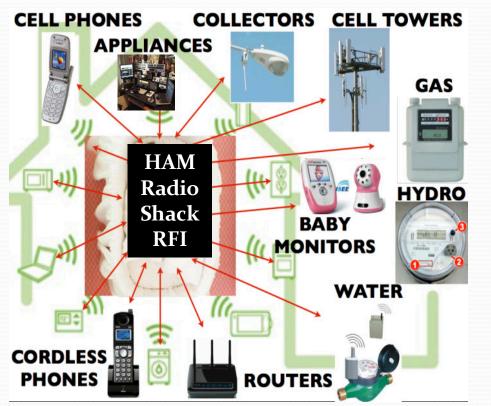
	RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz	
	Worked All Appliances	
	AWARDED TO	
	Amateur Radio Station	
	Who has caused persistent Radio Frequency Interference (RFI)	
·	to electronic appliances adjacent to the ham radio station	
•	Awarded this day of, 20	
	RFI Case Endorsements:	
	5 10 25 50 Bob Brehm, AK6R Chief Engineer	
	© 2022 Palomar Engineers®, Inc.	
	Or better yet→	



Both Awards free to download from website

Victim?

### Are you a VICTIM of local RFI?



#### **RFI Sources**

- Ham Antenna
- Radiating Coax
- Electronic Devices
- Solar Systems
- Grow Lights
- HVAC motor
- Plasma TV
- DSL/Routers
- Switching power Supplies
- Washer/Dryer or other appliances

QRN - High Noise Floor – Weak Signals – NO DX – No fun!

Source or Victim – we can help!

Workshop Objectives

### **RFI Workshop Objectives**

- Learn fundamentals of RFI <u>- identify symptoms</u>, <u>pinpoint</u> <u>causes</u> & <u>apply simple cures</u>
- What's a ferrite filter and how to choose & buy the right ferrite for your RFI issue
- How to use ferrites to solve the #1 RFI problem shared by all hams using coax-fed HF antennas
- How to use ferrites to <u>solve transmitter RFI problems</u>, <u>reduce your receiver noise</u> floor, and <u>keep your neighbor's</u> <u>and spouse happy!</u>
- Understand CONCEPTS with little or NO MATH required

Thinking cap time.....

NC

RFI

### What is RFI?

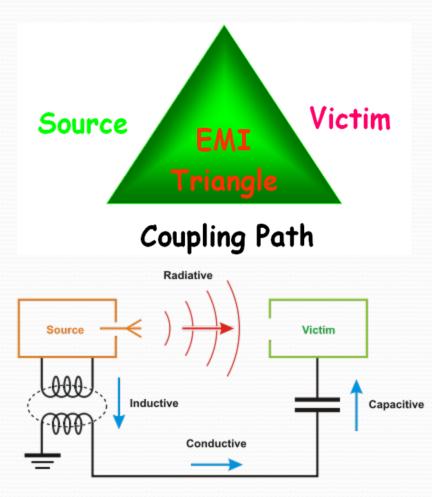
- A radio frequency (>100 KHz) disturbance that causes an electrical circuit to function improperly Common <u>Sources</u>
  - Sunspots, Cosmic noise, Lightning, atmospheric static, AC power lines (no ferrite fix)
  - "Transmitters" Ham, CB, AM/FM, electronic devices, speed controllers, inverters, switching power supplies, computer electronics, Cable/DSL/Ethernet (**can use filters to fix**)

#### Common <u>Victims</u>

• Any electronic device that malfunctions by acting as an unintended "receiver" of RFI

How do you get RFI?

#### How RFI is Transferred



Source (antenna) and Victim (antenna) coupled via Path (all must be present to have RFI)

## Multiple paths are very common:

- 1. Radiative air
- 2. Conductive wire(s)
- 3. Inductive wire
- 4. Capacitive wire



How to find the source & path

### Typical RFI in your shack/home

- **TX Symptoms** caused by <u>your transmitter</u> or antenna
  - Hot microphone RF lip burns, distorted audio
  - Antennas don't tune correctly, high SWR, radiating coax
  - Your voice/transmission causes interference with consumer electronic devices acting as ham radio frequency "receivers" (e.g. computers, TV/audio system, security system, garage door opener, telephone, sprinkler systems, lights, etc.)
  - <u>Spouse Alarm</u> goes off!

• **RX Symptoms** – caused by <u>sources outside your radio</u>

- High receive noise level <u>not due</u> to atmospheric conditions
- Birdies, chirps, buzzes, clicks, broadband noise on receiver
- Distorted receiver audio

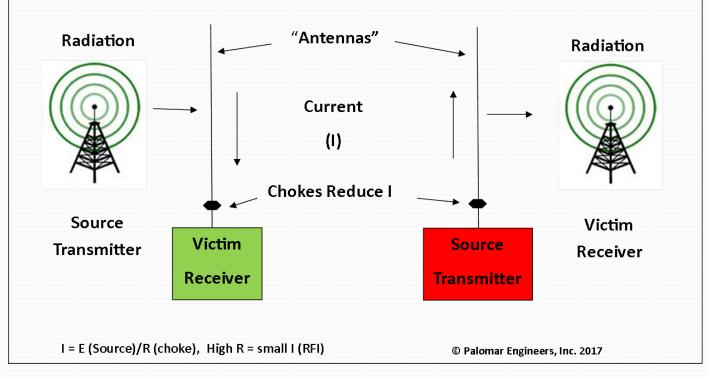
"Antennas" & paths

### Typical RFI receiving "antennas"

- AM broadcast, 160-80-60-40-30 meter RFI look for <u>long "antennas</u>" - AC power lines, telephone/DSL lines, satellite/cable coax, long Ethernet cables, antenna feed line coax shield, antenna control/rotor cables, 2<sup>nd</sup> story ground wires (avoid ¼ wavelength ground wires, e.g. 16 Feet)
- FM broadcast, 20 meter to 450 MHz RFI,– look for <u>short</u> <u>"antennas</u>" - speaker wires, device interconnect cables, mic cables, short Ethernet cables
- "Antennas" pick up radiated or conducted RFI which induces a <u>common mode current on ALL unshielded</u> "<u>antenna" conductors</u> from an RFI SOURCE

So how do we reduce this current?

#### Reduce RFI current to reduce RFI!



• Typical solutions: Resonant traps, <u>ferrites</u>, filters with high choking impedance



### Stop RFI = Minimize Current

- I (RFI Current) = E (TX induced voltage)/R (Choking resistance)
  - Shut down the SOURCE (Set E to zero)



- Choke the PATH (minimize I, increase R > 1000  $\Omega$ )
- Protect the VICTIM(Set R very high, >5000  $\Omega$ )

#### **Objective:** Minimize RFI current, I

Trivia Q: Why is current abbreviated with I and not C?

Ferrites are your friends to cure RFI



### Ferrite Fundamentals How to: Select - Buy - Configure and Apply





### Ferrite Topologies (Shapes)



<u>Slip On</u>Bead

<u>Snap On</u>Bead

Toroid or <u>Ring</u>

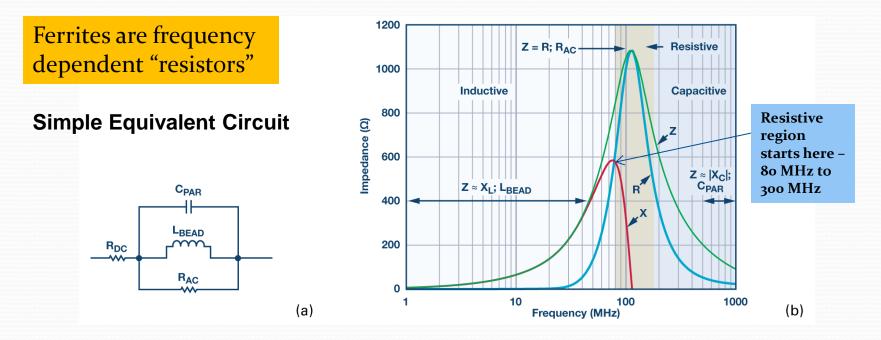
Fuzzy Ferret – not!

#### **FERRITE CHARACTERISTICS**

Cheap, easy to install, suppress RFI from 100 KHz - 2 GHz
Work on all <u>conductive</u> paths (antenna & feed lines, AC/DC, I/O cables)
Lots of options in size, shape, frequency range to suppress RFI currents
Are effective if you understand <u>how ferrites work</u>, <u>how to choose the</u> <u>correct ferrite</u> and <u>where to install the ferrite</u> for a particular RFI problem

#### Ferrite characteristics can be used to reduce RFI common mode current

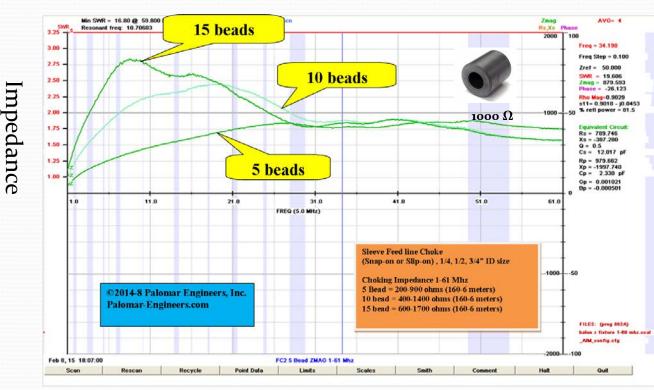
### How do Ferrites Work?



Ferrites are categorized by three response regions: inductive, resistive, and capacitive. To reduce high frequency interference (noise), <u>the ferrite must be</u> used in the resistive region where it acts like a resistor (R = F(MHz), which impedes the RF frequency noise (current) and dissipates it as heat.

How can resistance be increased?

#### Ferrites act like resistors-F(MHz)



<u>beads add resistance in</u> <u>series, but frequency</u> <u>dependent</u>

higher choking R (up to 30 MHz in this example)

At 7 MHz: 5 beads =  $400\Omega$ 10 bead =  $1000\Omega$ 15 beads =  $1600\Omega$ Feedline Chokes



Frequency (1-60 MHz) →

Impedance (Z) = Resistance +/- Reactance

Ferrites have one more additional very useful property...

# Ferrite resistance increases as (turns thru center hole)<sup>2</sup>

• If 1 turn = R, 2 turns = 4 x R, 3 turns = 9 x R



- More R = less RFI wire current, I = less RFI radiated from wire or induced into wire. (I=E/R)
- General rule: choking R > 10X line impedance
- (e.g. > 500  $\Omega$  for 50  $\Omega$  cable but 5000  $\Omega$  is 10x better)

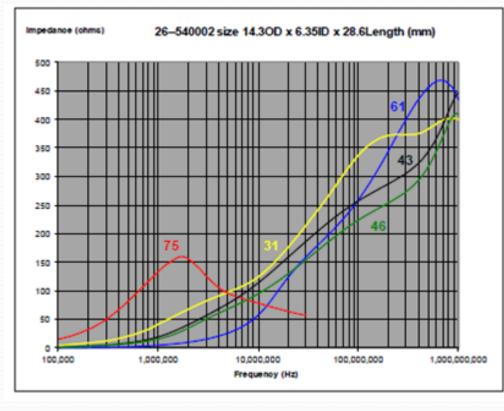


7 MHz:  $100\Omega$  (1 turn)  $900\Omega$  (3 turn)

4900Ω (7 turn)

Question: How do we choose the correct ferrite for the RFI frequency?

# Ferrite chemicals (Mix) determines effective frequency range



**Mix** = chemical formula of the iron oxide with manganese-zinc (31, 75) or nickel-zinc (43, 61)

#### **RULE:**

Select mix for max R at RFI FUNDAMENTAL frequency NOT frequency of receiver.

#### **Example:**

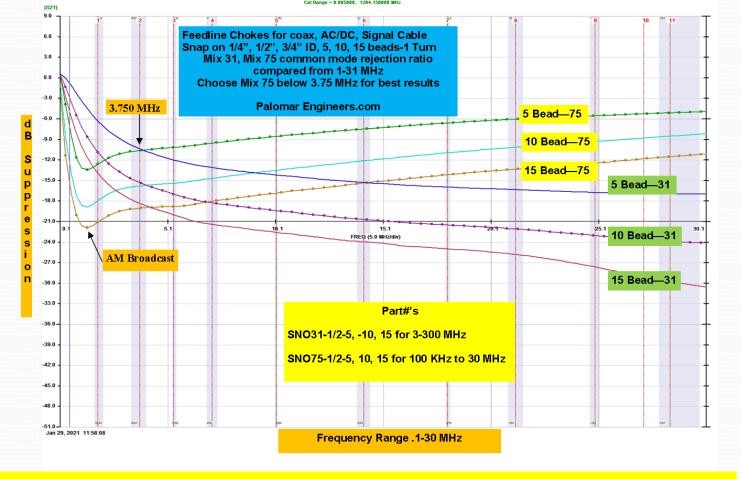
for .1-5 MHz use mix 75 for 1-300 MHz use mix 31 for 20-250 MHz use mix 43 for 200-2000 MHz use mix 61

Most popular ham frequency mixes are 31, 43, 61, 75.

Select mix based on RFI Frequency example – multi-bead sleeve choke

### Match RFI Frequency to Mix

Mix 75 up to 10 dB better under 3.75 MHz!



Selecting wrong or unknown mix will probably not work so..

How NOT to buy

### How <u>NOT</u> to buy ferrites!



Amazon/eBay





Swap meet

- NO Mix Designation
- NO Resistance/Impedance Range
- NO Frequency Range = No No No!
- Like Buying a resistor with an unknown resistance!

Buying unknown ferrites is like buying a box of rocks - a waste of time and money!

Another Alternative?

#### How to buy Ferrites the right way!





Ferrite Split Bead 10 Pack -1/2" ID – Mix 31 RFI Range: 1-300 MHz Part#: FSB31-1/2-10

Single turn, each bead provides:

MHz	5	10	25	100	250
Ω	71	100	156	260	260

(2 turns=4XΩ, 3 turns =9XΩ, 4 turns = 16XΩ) AC/DC/Coax/Audio-Video/Data Cables Use multiple turns for best results



Product Labeling (Mix, Frequency, Impedance) + Known Vendor = Winner!

So let's recap RFI 101

#### Ferrite Use Recap

- Determine RFI interfering frequency & suspected Path
- Choose proper mix (31, 43, 61, 75) to suppress RFI <u>fundamental</u> frequency
  - Choose Topology(slip-on, snap-on, ring) to fit the Path
    - Install ferrites on path retest for RFI suppression
    - Consider additional ferrites or paths if RFI persists

Most popular Mix for HF is MIX 31 (1-300 MHz) (Mix 75 for .1-5 MHz, Mix 61 for 200-2000 MHz)

**Subtle Note**: Mix frequency ranges shown are for <u>RFI suppression only. Mix</u> <u>frequency ranges for use as impedance transformers (2:1, 4:1, 9;1, 49:1, etc)</u> <u>are different.</u> NEVER use mix 31 for an impedance transformer as it has too much resistance and will heat up & easily saturate at low power.

How and where do you put the ferrite filter for <u>transmitter RFI?</u>

**Transmit RFI Solutions** 

## GOAL: STOP TRANSMIT RFI

Tip # 1: RFI Kits for HF Transceivers and Linear Amps

Tip # 2: Minimize coax cable radiation (HF or VHF)

Tip # 3: Install Solution Specific RFI Kits for VICTIMS



**Transmit RFI Solution** 

# Tip #1 - Install Transceiver, Linear Amp RFI Filters

#### Goal: Minimize SOURCE RFI <u>from</u> radio and amplifier "antennas" & cables



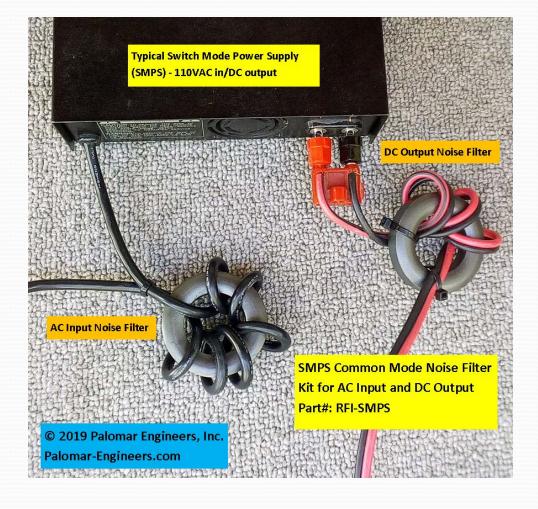
#### RFI Filters for Transmitters/Amps

- Transmitter Amplifier Antenna RFI suppression
  - Choke <u>ALL</u> cables into/out of radios, amplifier, antenna tuners
  - Includes
    - Coax RF feed lines at antenna feed point to suppress TRANSMIT RFI
    - Rotor/Antenna Control lines
    - AC/DC power Lines including wall warts!
    - Computer all radio interconnects, AC power
    - Examples on next slides
  - Recommendation: Filter ALL cables to equipment using Palomar transceiver, amplifier and computer RFI kits with mix, sizes, instructions already pre-determined by brand.

Buy it – Install it – Problem solved!

Power Supply, Transceiver/Amp Example

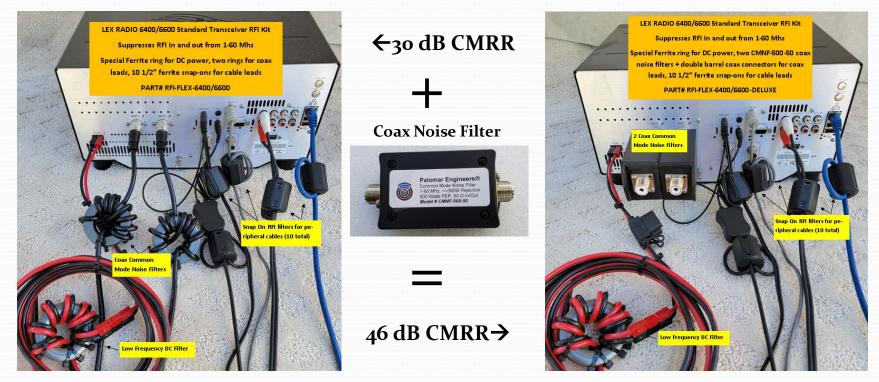
#### Switch Mode Power Supply Filters



SMPS may act as an RFI transmitter and uses DC cable and AC power line as its "antennas" – so filter both lines using Mix 75 to suppress switching frequency fundamental (< 2MHz) and all harmonics in ham bands.

Transceiver Kits

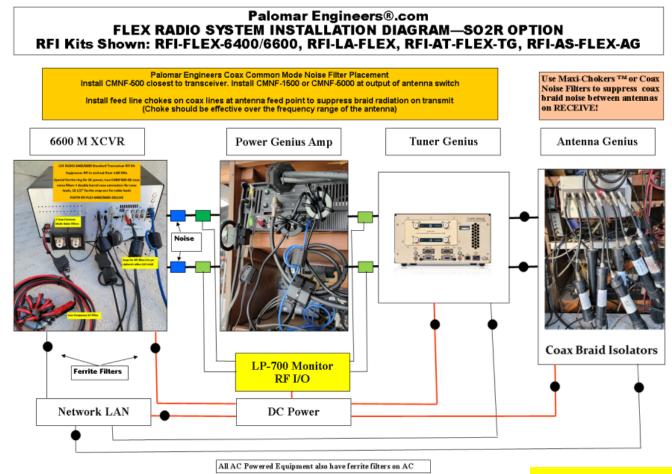
### Flex Radio XCVR RFI Solutions



• Standard configuration (left) and Deluxe with coax noise filters (right)

FLEX Station RFI Solution at AK6R

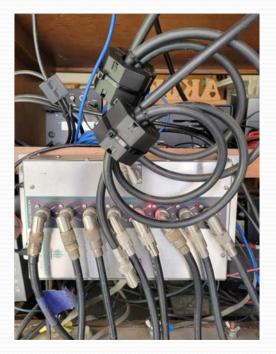
#### **FLEX Station RFI Kits**



FLEX Antenna Genius RFI Solution

### Flex Radio AG RFI Solutions







Ethernet, DC

**RF** Input

**Coax Braid Isolators** 

• Always: Ethernet, DC, RF In, Optional: Coax Braid Isolation – Maxi-Choker/antenna

Stop Coax Braid Radiation on Transmit

Transmit **RFI** Solutions

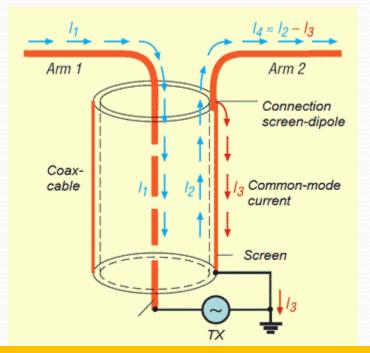
# Tip #2. Stop Transmit RFI current on coax braid

<u>ALL</u> coax fed antennas need a feed line choke at the antenna feed point!!!!! OR

Your dipole will become a tripole or Your unipole (vertical) will become a dipole and your coax will radiate causing local RFI!

### Is your Dipole a Tripole?

 Coax <u>outside</u> of braid acts as extension of <u>transmitting</u> antenna and extra <u>receive</u> antenna



#### Coax cable has 3 conductors!

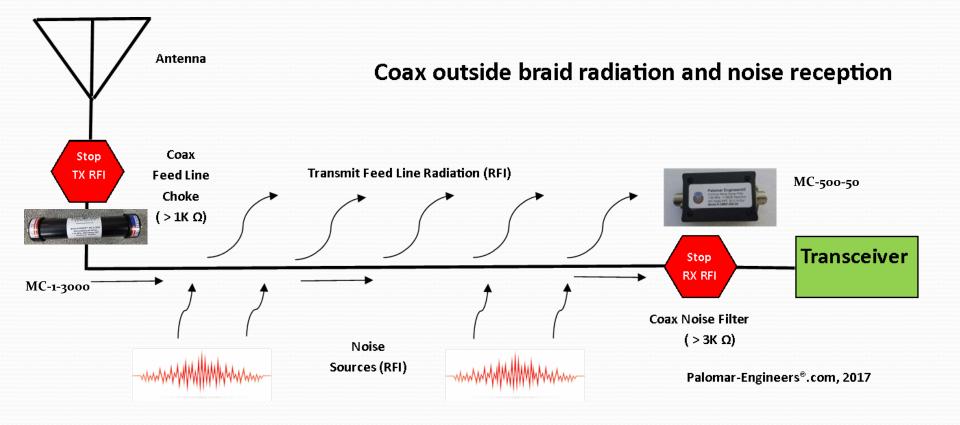
Coax <u>braid</u> is actually 2 conductors : 1 on the inside (normal RF signal), and 1 on the outside (common mode current) that turns a dipole into tripole on transmit or a second antenna on receive!

Goal is to reduce common mode current with a feed line choke to keep all transmit RF on antenna and use a coax noise filter to minimize noise into receiver.

FYI: 1% common mode braid current = 2.75 watt radiation at 1500 watts input, or 1.6 watts at 500 watts input or .7 watts at 100 watts input

**Typical Coax Antenna** 

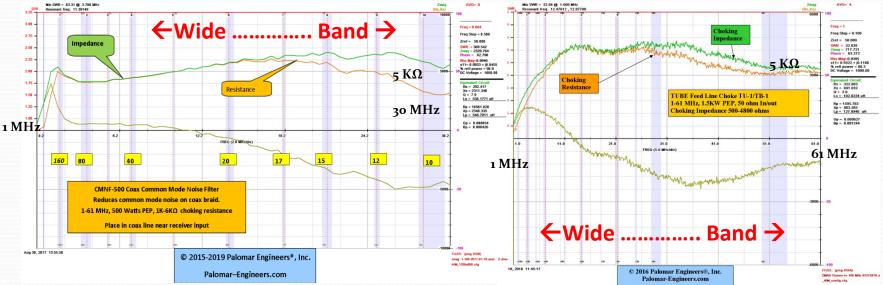
#### **Typical Coax Fed Antenna System**



Technical requirements for feed line choke selection

#### Choose choking resistance > $500\Omega$

#### over frequency range used



Coax Noise Filter (CMNF-500-50) 1-65 MHz >2K 500 Watts PEP, Up to 38 dB reduction (6 "S" units of common mode noise gone!

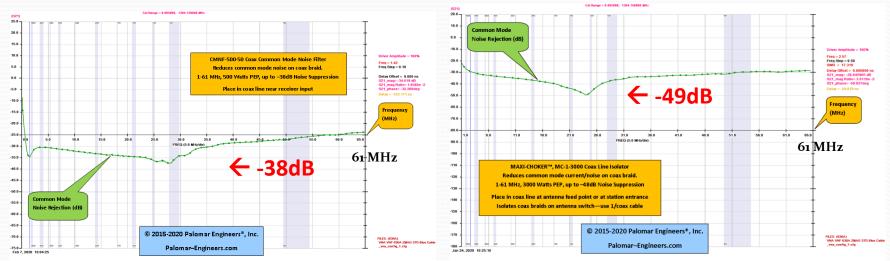




**Line isolator (part# MC-1-3000 – 3KW PEP)** 1-61 MHz >2K, 3KW PEP, 1K-6K ZΩ, 1 pound. All coax lines, Optional ground, static bleeder, up to 38db suppression!

#### Same data measured on VNA as CMRR $\rightarrow$

### Choose choke with CMRR > 20 dB over frequency range used



Coax Noise Filter (CMNF-500-50) 1-65 MHz >2K 500 Watts PEP, Up to 38 dB reduction (6 "S" units of common mode noise gone!



**Line isolator (part# MC-1-3000 – 3KW PEP)** 1-61 MHz >2K, 3KW PEP, 1K-6K ZΩ, 1 pound. All coax lines, <u>Optional ground, static bleeder,</u> up to 49 dB suppression!

#### DO NOT BUY CHOKES with NO SPECS!

1 "S" unit = 6 dB, 36 dB = 6 "S" units

#### **Chokes for Antenna Feed Point**



#### 3KW Maxi-Choker™ on beam



1:1 Balun = choke with balanced output

Hybrid Baluns – 4:1 + 1:1 in same enclosure

RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz

CB-4-1-1500 Hybrid Balun 50Ω:200Ω Balun+1:1 Choke 1.8-61 MHz, 1500 Watts PEP Palomar-Engineers.com

**Neighbor Victim RFI** 

# Tip #3. Install Solution Specific RFI Victim Kits

Our Goal: Minimize Transmit RFI to Electronic Devices in your home or your neighbor's homes



Neighbor RFI Strategy→

# Neighbor's RFI Strategy

### • Choke RFI SOURCE



Ham's Strategy is different!

# Ham's Solution to Neighbor's RFI

- Source (transmitter or antenna") Path Victim
  - Clean up your transmitter/shack first using techniques already discussed
- Assess Neighbor's Problem
  - Faulty device (device acting as receiver when not designed to be a radio receiver – e.g. Telephone, HDTV)
  - Determine frequency of "transmitter" that is causing the problem (<u>may not be on all bands may not be you</u>!)
  - Find the path (or paths) to the Victim (Receiver)
  - Choose the RFI choke kit for the frequency and path
  - Choke the path, protect the device (externally)!

# **Transmit RFI Solutions**

### **MY HOME or NEIGHBOR'S HOME**



**ALARM SYSTEM RFI** 



**HOME THEATER RFI** 



**MISCELLANEOUS RFI** 



GARAGE DOOR



**COMPUTER RFI** 



**TELEPHONE/DSL RFI** 

Recommendation: Use RFI kits for specific problems, have neighbor purchase and install – <u>do not make mods to neighbors equipment</u>! MOST problems are RFI picked up by AC power/phone lines so ferrite filters work well. TX RFI Recap

### RFI proof your transmissions recap

• Determine frequency range of RFI and Path

• Install transceiver and amplifier RFI kits to suppress RFI

- Install a feed line choke in ALL antenna coax lines of your station at the antenna feed point with enough choking impedance at the frequency of use to minimize coax braid radiation
- Install AC/DC power filters on affected equipment and retest for RFI suppression
  - Consider additional filters and paths if RFI persists

If you need help

Call or email (sales@Palomar- Engineers.com) or view specific solutions at **Palomar-Engineers.com** 

What about receiver noise?  $\rightarrow$ 

**Transmit RFI Solution** 

# GOAL: SUPPRESS <u>RECEIVE</u> RFI

Tip # 4: Install Coax Noise Filters if needed

Tip # 5: Identify & Suppress Local RFI/Noise Sources



# Receiver RFI Noise Strategy

- Assess S-P-V for the RFI You or someone else is source?
- PROTECT the VICTIM (Your receiver)
  - Ferrites on AC/DC cords, Wall Warts ring or snap on ferrites
  - Coax noise filters on antenna feed lines, ferrites on rotor lines
  - Ferrites on radio to computer interconnect cables
- ELIMINATE/ISOLATE the SOURCE
  - Choke AC/DC power to source, snap on ferrites for all I/O
- Call Palomar Engineers if you get stuck or need help

# RFI – AC/DC Power Line Chokes



Choose mix frequency range and size to fit cable – <u>use max multiple turns</u>

Refrigerators, Washer/Dryer, motors, routers, appliances

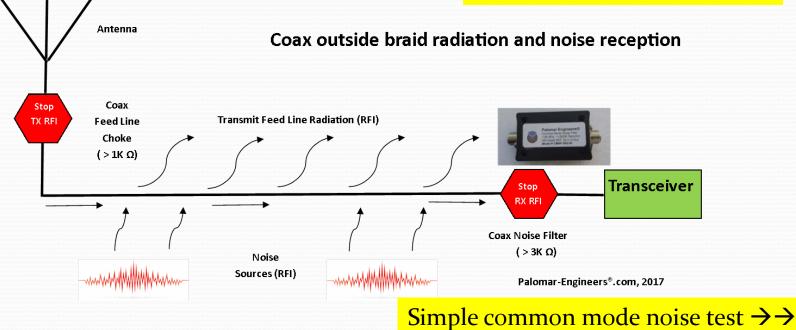
Coax RFI

# **Receive Coax RFI Problem**

 Symptoms: High noise levels, spurs, buzzes, periodic signals across bands

Typical Receive Chain Connections

Coax braid acts as 2<sup>nd</sup> receive antenna and combines with "real" signal at connector!



# Tip #4. Install Coax Noise Filter to Suppress <u>RX</u> RFI

Less common mode noise current (RFI) = More DX! How to select and install filters for maximum effect

Quick Test for Common Mode RFI



Coax Center Conductor Only—measure noise level

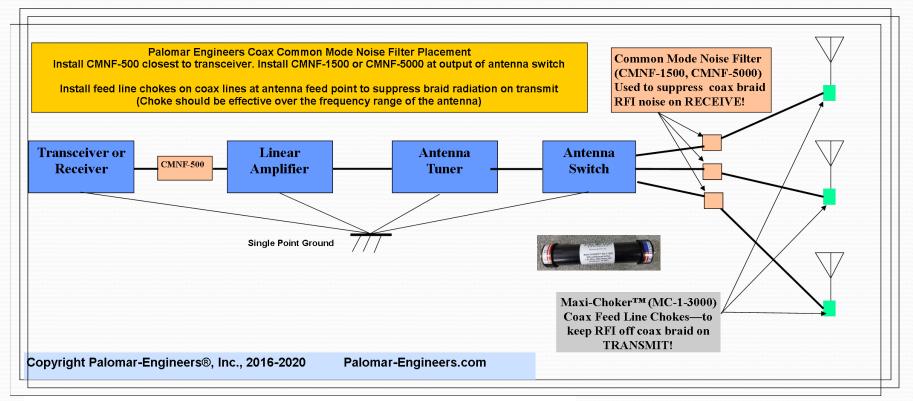


Coax Center Conductor and outer shield measure noise level. If higher, then you have common mode noise

Where to install?



### **Coax Noise Filter Installation**

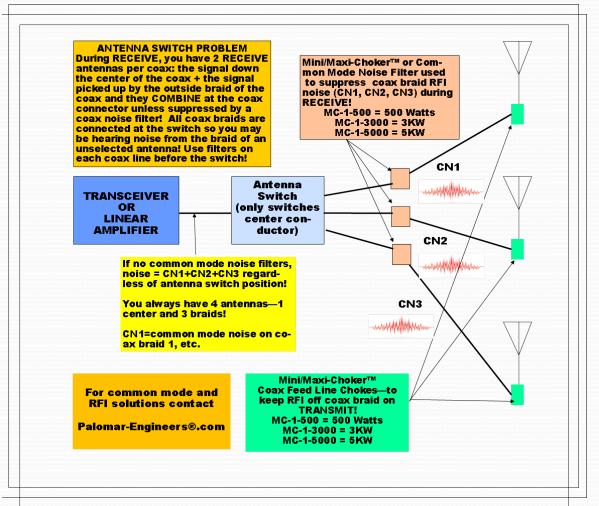


### Where to Install

- Choke at antenna for <u>TRANSMIT</u> RFI
- Noise Filter at Antenna Switch for <u>RECEIVE</u> RFI
- Between Transceiver and Amplifier
- Single point ground system

Antenna Switch Solution

# **Antenna Switch Solution**





500 watt Mini-Chokers



#### **Coax Braid Isolators**

**RX RFI Recap** 

# Suppress RFI Receive Noise Recap

• Perform simple noise test on your radio

- Unplug your antenna and see if all the noise goes away if not, noise is entering from another wire into radio probably power supply install transceiver RFI kit on all lines
- Perform common mode test with antenna coax if noise increases when you screw in the outer coax connector you have common mode noise and need a coax noise filter. IF no change then ferrite filters won't help and you will have to kill the path or stop the SOURCE
- If you have an antenna switch unplug all antennas and perform the above test on each antenna coax individually and install coax noise filters as needed
- Consider additional filters and paths if RFI persists

If you need help

Call or email (sales@Palomar- Engineers.com) or view specific solutions at Palomar-Engineers.com

What if you are a ferrite newbie?  $\rightarrow$ 

**Receive RFI Solution** 

# Tip #5. Use Ferrite Combo RFI Kits for Newbies

Ferrite Combo Kits for Troubleshooting Multiple RFI Issues include <u>multiple ferrite shapes and sizes</u>

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" ID snap-ons and 1.4" ID rings are the most popular sizes and can be used to solve most ham radio HF RFI problems

or





Palomar-Engineers.com

Use Discount code "NEWBIE23" – get 10% off orders thru 12/31/2023





# Q & A

- I will be available at the FLEX Radio booth or the HRO Booth during the Hamvention or you can call or contact me at Palomar-Engineers.com
- ENJOY THE HAMVENTION!



**RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz** 

- Website: Palomar-Engineers.com
- Email: Sales@Palomar-Engineers.com
- Phone: 760-747-3343
- Bob Brehm, AK6R Chief Engineer
- This presentation available on the website.

# **Additional RFI Slides**

• These slides show additional examples of NON-FLEX RADIO kits, and comparisons of individual products and other information not included in Slide Show presented at HAMVENTION 2023

# Other Program Topics by AK6R

- ABC's of RFI for HAMS
- End Fed Antenna Secrets
- Using Coax Noise Filters & Feed Line Chokes to Optimize your Station
- Make Life Simple with an Off-Center Fed Antenna
- Horizontal & Vertical Loops for HF Operations
- Terminated Antennas RF Magic or Dummy Load?
- The Lure and Lore of Ladder Line Antennas
- Using Baluns, Ununs and Chokes to Work More DX

Let's talk about RFI

# Linear Amplifier RFI Kits

Palomar has RFI kits for all brands of linear amps

### Transceiver RFI Kit

Palomar Engineers Ameritron Palomar Engineers Heathkit Amp Amp RFI Kit RFIKit **RF** Input Choke AC Line Choke **RF** Input Relay Cable Choke Choke AC Line RF Out Relay Cable RF Out Choke Choke Choke Choke

Ameritron 811

HEATHKIT SB220

Linear Amplifier RFI Kit

Clean up the RFI SOURCE first - your radio and amp

Solution Kits for Tube and Solid State Amps

Now coax feed lines

# **Transceiver RFI Kits**

### Palomar has RFI kits for all brands of transceivers

### Transceiver Standard RFI Kit



ICOM 7300

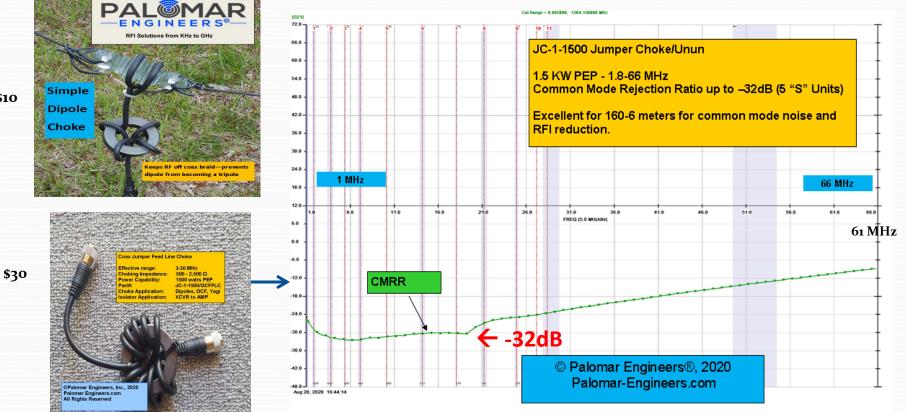
### Transceiver Deluxe RFI Kit with NF



Clean up the RFI **SOURCE** first – <u>your radio</u>

Linear Amps too!

# Simple DIY Feed Line Chokes



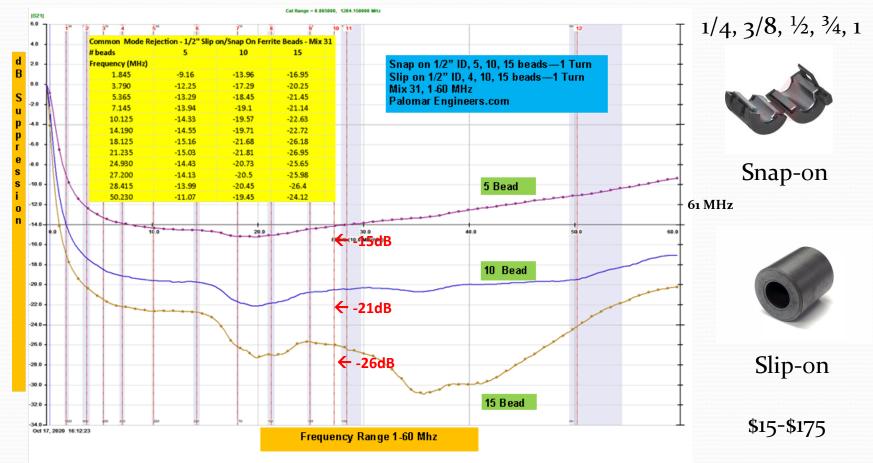
For HF use Mix 31, 1.4" ID Ring with multiple turns (10 turns = -32 db Common Mode suppression)

Next: Multi-bead chokes

\$10

# Multi-Bead Chokes (Slip-On/Snap-On)





More beads = higher common mode suppression

Match to Mix

## Wall Wart RFI Noise Reduction Kit

Wall Wart switching DC power supplies that plug into the AC power line plug and provide DC power to laptops, routers, battery chargers, cell phone chargers, etc are a <u>known source of broadband RFI</u>

A <u>simple ferrite ring filter on the DC power line can help suppress the RFI noise</u> affecting the device or keep the DC power cord from acting as an antenna and radiating RFI from the powered device.



RFI Filter on DC Cord



Economy 5 or 10 ring kit

**RFI Newbies Special** 

# Coax Noise Filter Comparison



\$25 Snap On Choke 500-1000Ω 1-2 "S" Units SNO-1/2-5 And the second sec

\$30 Ring Choke 1K-2KΩ 2-4 "S" Units JC-1-1500 Palomar Engineers® Cara Noise Filter. SW PEP Isoland the case - 50 drins Model # CMWF-500

\$70 Noise Filter 2K-6KΩ 3-6 "S" Units CMNF-500-50

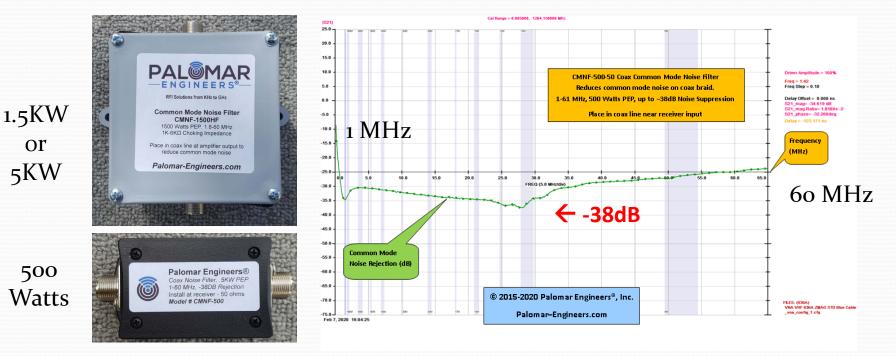
#### **Criteria to Consider**

- Adequate Choking Impedance (Z) > 500 Ω
- Effective Frequency Range where  $Z > 500 \Omega$
- Sufficient Power Rating (PEP, Digital)
- Physical Size/Weight/Coax Diameter

**Coax Noise Filters** 

# **Coax Noise Filter Specs**

#### >>> One of the best kept secrets in ham radio!!! <<<



<u>Placed at RADIO END of coax feed line to suppress common mode</u> <u>current on coax braid between antenna feed point choke and radio</u>

1 "S" unit = 6 dB, -36dB = 6 "S" Units

Now AC/DC Path Filters

TOP SECRET