

Mounted Combat

Wielding a sword from the back of a horse is a lot different from normal melee opponent and requires much more training for both character and mount. When engaging in mounted combat, the character must choose combat manoeuvres and actions for both himself and his mount.

Untrained Riders

Not all professions are trained in the arts of mounted combat and only those trained to do so are able to take advantage of the manoeuvres outlined in this section. Being untrained in mounted combat whilst in combat on horseback also incurs a -3 penalty to Attack and Defence as if the character were untrained in the weapon with which they are attacking (if, additionally, this is a weapon with which they are untrained, the penalties are compounded).

Untrained Mounts

Even if the character is trained in mounted combat, the mount they are riding might not be. Untrained mounts

will not willingly enter combat and, even if they are forced, are unlikely to do so effectively. Untrained mounts are also unable to take advantage of any combat manoeuvres and may only take move actions. A rider can compel his untrained mount to enter combat on a successful Strength check against a difficulty of 14.

Once in combat, and for each combat round the untrained horse remains in combat, the rider must make a successful Strength check against a difficulty of 15, +1 for each attacker above the first engaging the mounted character. If this roll fails, not only does the horse panic and flee, but may throw his rider from his back in the process. The rider must make a Reflexes roll against a difficulty of 14 or be thrown from the panicking horse for 1d6 Health Points of damage, reduced by the AF of any armour worn (to a minimum of 1 Health Point of damage). Either way, the horse will flee at double its normal movement rate away from the combat in whichever direction is most expeditious. The Horsemanship skill can be used to help with any of these checks.

Controlling an untrained mount in combat constitutes the character's move-equivalent action each round. Consequently, the rider may not indulge in any full-round actions while on an untrained mount in combat.

Movement

A horse's normal walking movement rate is only slightly higher than a normal human's in combat (35', as opposed to a human's 25' – a human's combat movement is 30' because they tend to move a little quicker in combat). However, horses are capable of much faster movement than any human could hope to achieve.

Trotting, Cantering and Running

A horse may trot in combat, raising its combat move to 70'. A horse moving with only its move-equivalent action (approximately a third of its normal combat movement) may cover 25' per round and still get an attack action.

If the rider urges the horse into a canter, this is the equivalent of a full-move jog action, which reduces the horse's Defence score to zero, but allows the horse to cover 140' in a single round.

Running speed for a horse is 210' per round, which not only reduces the horse's Defence score to zero, but requires the horse to either trot, canter or run as a full-round action the following round.

Such high movement rates provide the rider with a significant tactical advantage in combat (and are great for chasing down fleeing enemies). Additionally, because the horse's actions are separate from the rider's,

even if the horse makes a full round movement action, the rider will still be able to make his attack.

Charging

Charging uses both the horse's and the rider's actions for that round, but the effects can be devastating. The horse must have at least a 25' clear run at the target in a straight line (up to the horse's running speed of 210'). Anything in the way of this charge may be trampled (see below). If a trample attack is made before the charge reaches its intended target, the benefits of the charge are lost and the target will only be trampled instead.

The benefits of a charge are three-fold:

1. A character proficient in a lance may make a lance attack as a (2d6, 8) weapon. If the lance hits, regardless of whether it penetrates his opponent's armour and does any damage, a mounted opponent must make a Reflexes check against a difficulty of the attacker's Strength +2 or be unhorsed. Unhorsed opponents take an additional 1d6 HP damage, reduced by their AF (to a minimum of 1). If a lance is used against an opponent that is not mounted, the opponent is thrown to the floor and must make a Reflexes check against a difficulty of 14 or be trampled (see below).
2. An attack with any other kind of weapon is made at +2 to Attack, +1 Armour Bypass and +1 Damage.

3. The horse will follow-through to the end of its movement (210') that round, making it difficult for the target to make a counter-attack and the horse must make another full-round move action the following round. If the rider wishes to bring the horse to a halt before its full movement is exhausted, he must make a Strength (horsemanship) check against a difficulty of 12. Every point by which the rider succeeds, reduces the distance travelled by 20'. If the rider fails the check, he must make a Reflexes (or horsemanship) check against a difficulty of 14 or be thrown from his horse.

Trampling

A trample is a special type of run manoeuvre available to the horse whereby the horse runs 210' in a straight line (and, as with the run manoeuvre, must either run or take a normal full-round move action in the following round) and anything in the way of the horse (friend or foe alike!) may be trampled.

If the targets can see the horse coming, they may make an Evasion check against the horse's speed of 14. If they fail to Evade, choose not to, or are not facing the direction of the charge, the warhorse makes a free attack with its hooves against any and all of the characters and creatures trampled. In addition to this, the rider may choose to make a single attack action against any of the targets that failed to Evade with the mounted melee bonus of +2 to

Attack. Because the target is unlikely to have set any Defence aside for this attack, the target effectively has a Defence of 0. Also, the rider is likely to be carried out of range of a counter-attack by his mount's continued charge.

Whilst the horse may continue to run in subsequent rounds, the trample effect of the charge is lost.

Melee Combat

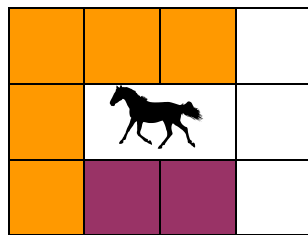
Fighting from horseback against smaller creatures (i.e., man-sized or smaller) gives the rider a +2 to his Attack score and +1 to his Defence against attacks made against him from smaller enemies (note that this +1 is to the Defence value assigned to an attacker, not to the character's total Defence score to be divided between all of his enemies). Obviously, if his enemy is likewise mounted or similarly sized, these bonuses are lost. The use of two-handed weapons on horseback is awkward and less controlled. While the rider still gets the +2 Attack bonus, he suffers a -3 to his Defence score (but still gets the +1 bonus to any Defence assigned to an attack from a smaller enemy).

For the purposes of splitting Defence, a rider and mount count as a single target (meaning Defence does not have to be split between the two creatures' attacks). The exception to this is if the character is attacking the horse, not the rider.

Facing

Whilst a warhorse is faster, bigger, stronger and more intimidating than a mere knight would be on foot, it is much less manoeuvrable. In melee combat, the horse is only able to change facing by a 45° facing for each move-equivalent action taken (i.e., for a full-round action, the horse could change his facing up to 90° in either direction). However, from his vantage point atop the horse, the rider may attack an enemy in any of the three squares in front of his horse and the three squares along its side (which side is dependent on the handedness of the rider - if the rider is wielding a two-handed weapon, this can be either side).

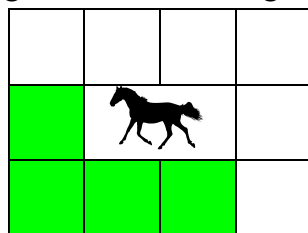
The chart shows in orange the squares at which the right-handed rider can strike during his action. If the rider is wielding a two-handed sword, the additional squares he could target are shown in purple.



Shields

Shields are only effective against attacks made from the side of the horse of the arm to which the shield is strapped.

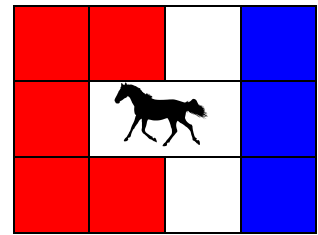
For example, a right-handed knight could use his shield (on his left arm) against attackers in the squares highlighted in green.



Warhorse Attacks

In the absence of other commands, a trained warhorse will automatically kick an enemy in one of the three squares behind the horse and attempt to bite an enemy in one of the five squares in front of him. To attack twice in this way constitutes the warhorse's full round action and cannot change facing that turn unless it foregoes one of the attacks.

In the chart opposite, the red squares are subject to the warhorse's bite attack and the blue squares are subject to the warhorse's kick attack.



Ranged Combat

Using a ranged weapon from atop a moving warhorse is possible, but contributes an additional -3 penalty to the ranged combatant's Attack score. Using a ranged weapon from a normal horse is at -5, because of the additional control the rider needs to exert over his mount.

Using a ranged weapon from the back of a stationary warhorse incurs no 'unstable platform' penalty, but normal riding horses have a tendency to fidget, conveying an additional -3 penalty to the ranged combatant's Attack score.

Attacking a Mount

Sometimes the only way to get the upper hand against a mounted opponent is to bring down his horse first. Whilst knights frown on such dishonourable behaviour, other professions may consider the horse the best target for their attacks. And, of course, the evil cur against which a gallant knight may be attacking is also unlikely to have any compunction against such a tactic.

Attacking the mount works exactly like any normal attack. However, whereas normally the mount and rider constitute a single entity for the purposes of splitting Defence, if an attack is made against the horse and not the rider, the attacker must consider horse and rider as two separate entities for the purposes of defending against their counter-attacks and split his Defence between them accordingly.

If the mount is killed while the rider is still atop, he must make a Reflexes test against a difficulty of 13+1 for every enemy combatant surrounding the horse, or take 1 Health Point of damage (regardless of armour). Either way, the rider loses 1 combat round disentangling himself from his fallen horse.