

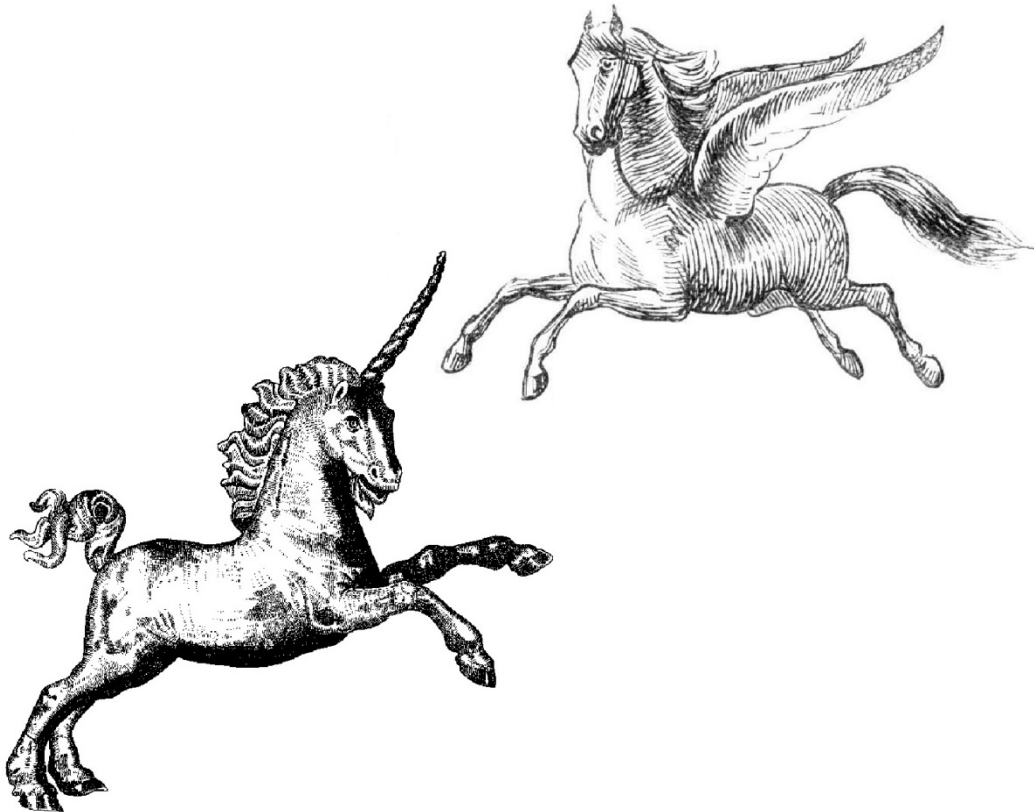


Board Enterprises proudly presents  
Build Your Fantasy World in

**Small Bites**

# The Hoof Wars of the Hasslem Plains

aka All About Equines



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to another edition of **Small Bites**, our modular look at fantasy worlds and fantasy world building. This month our theme is Equines as seen embroiled in the Hoof Wars of the Hasslem Plains. This edition is about those oh so important steeds - the equines, including (but not limited to) horses, pegasi, and unicorns. Not only is it about these splendid creatures, but it is about how you as a GM and world creator can use standard fantasy creatures, but give them an entirely different spin for your game world. One note - We are going to cover centaurs in a different edition.

What is this thing? Well, most people are seeing it as a monthly e-zine. We've always seen it more as a "secret box" that you open up and find tons more content than you ever expected. But our highest priority is for it to serve as a means for you to communicate with us, and for us to show you that we're listening. Case in point: Hoof Wars was slated to come out much later than it is. But as you, the involved and participating gamers, responded to surveys and other social media, we pushed it forward **because that's what you said you wanted!!**

We are listening, and we want you to participate. See the Conclusion section for all of our contacts, and please use them!

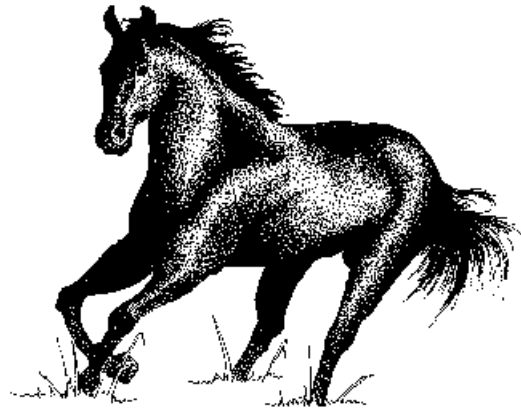


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## FLETNERN WIKI

All of these posts are already out on the wiki and you can refer to them. We have gathered them here, because we think they are valuable in a group, and they all pertain to our theme for the month. All of them are also tagged as being in the category of "Equines" in case you are more comfortable using the wiki instead of this edition.



### Bosanc Horses

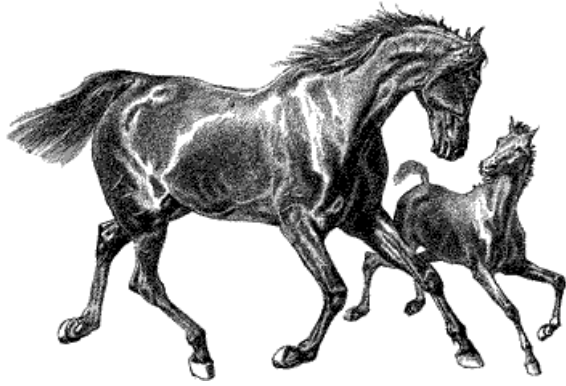
### Animal

Bosanc horses are the largest of all horses. They are bred in and near Traigar. They are prized as war horses, since they are capable of easily carrying full armored knights into battle. They have long hair compared to other horses and typically mean temperaments. They do not survive in warm climates well, though they can handle temperate zones. Some knights have been known to keep them shaved, which helps in the warmer climes. They do not take to running and typically only walk, but they will charge into battle without fear. They are named for the tribe that first domesticated them.

### Celete Ponies

### Animal

Celete ponies are used as steeds. They are bred in the Triad, and come in various colorations, including pale white, gray, golden and tan. Their silky manes are always of the same color. Their gait has a fluid motion that makes them more comfortable to ride for long periods of time. They are often considered a woman's steed, as they are considered the most comfortable riding steed in the world. They were named for the breeder's wife who began the line.



### **Cessernante Horses**

### **Animal**

Cessernante horses are bred in the Southern Plains and sold throughout the world as riding horses and race horses. They are very sleek with thin legs. Breeders mark two major lines: one all black, and one all white. Roan and black and white spotted are rare and typically put to death. They have long manes, but very short hair elsewhere. They drink an inordinate amount of water, making them of little use in the deserts. They were named for the river where the largest breeding facilities are. They have a surprising stamina and endurance, but relatively little strength.

### **Circle Forest**

### **Region**

The Circle Forest is a large wooded region taking up nearly half of the lands controlled by the city-state of Myork. The southern border is chaotic, but the northern border is clearly defined by the Yilldre Condrontra (aka the West Dragon River).

Despite occupying the northern half of Myork, the Circle Forest is remarkably low in population density. While the southern region of the forest has lumber mills and other forestry industry, the northern portions are held entirely by the various nature cults. Chief among these cults are the druidic elves. The Circle Forest gets its name from the various tree circles within it. While the nature cults insist these are natural occurrences showing the magic of nature, most of them were planted and nurtured by the various religions, though some were started centuries ago.

The Circle Forest has long been a draw to various religious people and groups. These people have harshly different approaches to the world when compared to the city-state of Myork with its knights and castles. Throughout the history of Myork, the Circle Forest has been seen as a rebel stronghold, though they have never managed to completely root out all of the enemies that hide within. At the current time, there is a calm between the two groups. Only rare incidents of violence occur, and these are typically between very small groups of people.

### **Fennemenne Company, The**

### **Group**

The Fennemenne Company is a cartel based out of Brinston. They began as a company of mercenaries and sell swords led by the elven hero Cellnit Ayundre. During a mission against some trolls in the South Pot Mountains, they accidentally fell on a dragon nest. After defeating the dragon, Cellnit organized the teams to harvest the dragon to the best of their ability. The team made so much extra money from the dragon's corpse that they decided to do this as a career.

The company began to seek out and attack dragons in the South Pot Mountains, harvesting them for parts that were valuable to the alchemists and enchanters of Brinston. Many Marils believe that Fennemenne has wiped out the dragons of the region, and while they have thoroughly thinned the wild dragons, they have not fully eliminated them.

Extinct or just rare, their prey is now too difficult to find and defeat, so the company needed to find a new source of income. During their various missions in the South Pot Mountains, Cellnit was crippled by a dragon. A dragon bit him and carried him off, but Cellnit blasted him in the eyes with a spell, causing the dragon to drop him. The fall pulverized his lower spine, beyond the ability of healers to repair. Cellnit now acts as the company's manager and administrator, staying at their headquarters in Brinston, while the rest of the team leads their recruits on the hunt for more dragons.

Needing a new hunting ground, the company began running missions to Hughijen, where the bulk of the dragons are. While there, they sought out new sources of income and managed to enter the Hasslem Plains through the Nooggarsh Hills. They killed and harvested a small herd of unicorns, taking their horns and hides along with the dragon products they had collected on that trip.

Though they see nothing wrong with killing unicorns, a creature they see as no different than a dragon or horse, they have gotten themselves in some hot water because of this. There are groups around the world that see the unicorns as holy or otherwise special and they react violently when hunters like the Fennemenne Company harvest their horns. Despite this, there is a market for the unicorn products, and Fennemenne needed to branch out from simply supplying dragon pieces.

### **Gnome's Colt**

### **Animal**

Throughout the Tunnel World, the aldar use a breed of pony called the Gnome's Colt. These animals were bred specifically to be shorter than normal ponies, without losing any strength. They also have managed to survive with little or no sunlight. These animals pull carts and carry packs, depending on what is needed. The aldar also use slave porters of just about any race, but the Gnome's Colts are seen as less likely to flee and

typically stronger while still fitting well through the tunnels.

Gnome's Colts are typically between 320-400lbs, but can typically carry a pack of up to 120lbs. They typically move about as quickly as a stronger human porter (faster than an ox, but slower than a horse). Feeding them can be complicated as their feed needs to be brought in. Many cartels that use the colts have above ground bases where the small horses can eat and get fresh air, though typically only at night. Their excrement is saved, as it is a valuable fuel in the aldar slums. When a colt dies, its hide and meat will not go to waste.

### **Hasslem Plains**

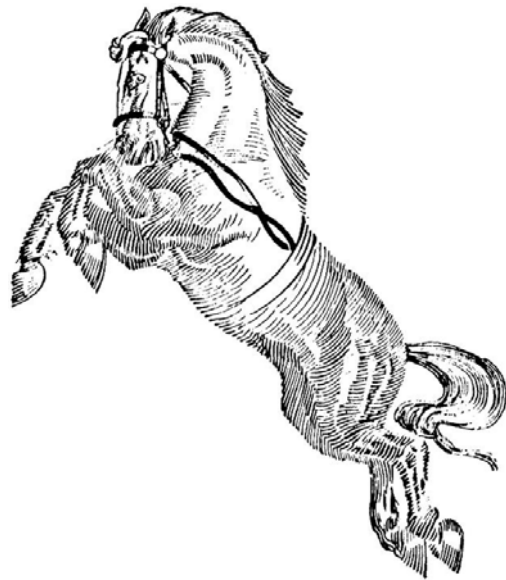
### **Region**

The Hasslem Plains are southwest of Purity, between the Tanngrim Forest and the Nooggarsh Hills region. The Hasslem Plains are more typically known as the Thunder Plains in Purity or the Herd Plains in the Circle Forest and Myork. It is this region that is dominated by the pegasi and unicorn herds. The plains are at a relatively high elevation, about 600-800' above sea level and there are a series of cliffs along the western border of the region. These cliffs make it very difficult for smugglers and hunters to get into or out of the region without moving through the Tanngrim Forest. The number of dragons in the Nooggarsh Hills makes coming in from the south a frightfully difficult task.

While the government of Purity has outlawed the slaughter of unicorns and pegasi, they do little about it in the region. They rely on their military patrols along the northern border of the Tanngrim Forest to apprehend any poachers. The elves of the Circle Forest take a more direct path. Many of the elves feel a calling to the Herd Plains. These elves will travel to the plains and live there, studying the beauty of the equine races from a distance. These elves will then patrol the plains, hunting poachers and wranglers alike. (The Tands have no laws against capturing the animals, just against killing them.)

The Hasslem Plains are technically a steppe. The majority of the region receives little rain due to the rain shadow effect of the Mountains of Purity. Despite not having ample rain for extensive forests, there is rainfall, enough to support the grasses and shrubs of the plain. There are also extensive streams and creeks that carry water out of the mountains and onto the plains allowing the equines of the region to have many watering holes and other drinking spots. These waterways often enter the Plains in beautiful cascades and waterfalls, further adding to the idyllic atmosphere.

There are few predators on the Hasslem Plains. The unicorn and pegasi herds have killed off most of their enemies and are ferocious enough to keep the dragons from attempting to set up hunting grounds. This lack of predators may be the reason the herds seem to grow beyond the land's ability to support them, bringing the herds into conflict with each other.



### **Nanganant Ponies**

### **Animal**

Nanganant ponies are used as war steeds by halflings and sporting steeds by humans. Bred in the Triad, their colorations vary but are always a true white, brown or black, very seldom have any markings. They are very sleek, with a thin waist, a solid chest, and seemingly over-sized hind legs (like a modern greyhound). They are extremely fast and agile. They typically have a nasty temperament which might be encouraged in breeding. They were named for the town where they were originally bred.

### **Nooggarsh Hills**

### **Region**

The Nooggarsh Hills are a dragon infested shrubland dotted with hills throughout. It is bordered on the south and east by the Mountains of Purity, on the west by the Ocean Semphesteus, and on the north by the Hasslem Plains. Being such a difficult and dangerous place to enter, few people have ever ventured into the region, and fewer still have ever left it.

The Nooggarsh Hills are well known for their dragon populations, but they are also filled with various species of equines, the prey of the dragons. Many legends exist about what might lie behind all those dangerous drakes, but there is no history of there ever having been a civilization in this area, so the answer is likely that nothing exists back there.

One likely assumption is that the Nooggarsh Hills hide ample gem and precious metal resources, just like the hills separating the Tandish Lowlands from the Mountains of Purity do. The geology is very similar, and it would be safe to assume that if someone were able to penetrate the hills and find the right gem mine, they would become very wealthy very quickly - if they could survive.

## Nooggarsh Horse

### Animal

The Nooggarsh “horse” is a forest dwelling pony that lives in the Nooggarsh Hills. They are most commonly a light tan with patches of cream. Sometimes these patches can be so large that the pony appears to be cream with small tan highlights, or they can be an almost leopard print of cream on tan. The legs are almost always darker than the body, and they are reasonably well camouflaged in their bushy home. Some have been known to have striped legs, similar to an okapi.

Adult males stand close to 14 hands tall (between 4½’ and 5’ at the shoulder) and as such would be considered large ponies. They have the stereotypical wider heads (often considered shorter) and smaller ears of most ponies. They are also known for their thick and bushy manes.

They are a common prey animal for the various dragonkind in the hills. Perhaps because of this, small herds can often be found wandering the mountains or into various other regions, likely seeking a safe spot to exist without the constant threat of dragons. The Tands have found them to be exceptional draft ponies and are happy to put them to work. They do not function well as steeds, perhaps because they continue to retain too much of their wild ancestry.

## Plogga Ponies

### Animal

Plogga Ponies are used for draft purposes. They are bred in the Triad and have a deep brown coat with a thick, black mane. They often have some markings in white and are often considered shaggy. They are prized for their even temperament and stamina.

## Rairbridair Horses

### Animal

Rairbridair horses are some of the most common horses in the world. They are extensively bred throughout the Rhoric Plains and the Central Plains. They are of a medium in size, but are surprisingly hardy. They are used for war, work and riding. They are typically considered to look “a little shaggy”, and therefore not desired by nobles and others trying to make an impression. Their colorations are always in the browns and tans. They have a very mild temperament. They were originally named for the Rhoric dialect spoken by the first breeders.

## Robelic Horses

### Animal

Robelic horses are bred in and around Dalavar as desert steeds. They have remarkable speed, though it is usually only good for sprints. They are able to endure the desert heat and survive with low quantities of water. They are quite happy outside of the desert environments too, but often need to be protected from colds and flu.

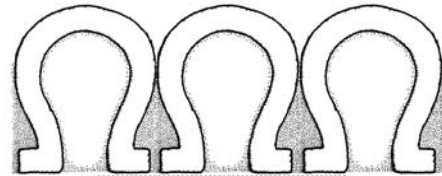
Their strength is comparatively low, but their agility is remarkable. Temperaments vary, but stubbornness can be a real problem. They are typically black or brown with white markings, but they are never a solid color.

## Tannglim Forest

### Region

The Tannglim Forest lies along the southern border of the Tandish Lowlands and as such most of it is beyond the official control of the city-state of Purity. Despite this, the Duchy of Jynyendale frequently patrols the northern sections of the woodlands both for their own protection and to discourage any poachers attempting to enter the Hasslem Plains.

The forest can be a dangerous place with various predatory animals, including drakes and dragons that have come down from the mountains. In addition, much of the Tandish Lowlands along the borders of the two regions are marshy, making travel difficult. This is the main reason that the Forest still stands despite the desire for lumber in the ship building capital of Purity. The forest can be hilly, but does not have the elevation of the Hasslem Plains. For this reason, some small fishing villages do exist along the sea coast of the region, typically in places where natural boundaries offer protection from the beasts further in the woods.



## Pegasus and Unicorn Wars

The title of this edition is **The Hoof Wars of the Hasslem Plains**. There is a reason for this - over the millennia that the pegasi and unicorns have existed together on the Hasslem Plains, there have been times of drought when there is less food for all of the herds. Even if the drought is fairly localized, it can cause the herds in that particular area to believe that their food sources are in danger, and this causes the two species to battle each other.

Would two herds of pegasi or two herds of unicorns battle each other? Possibly, but they are going to be far quicker to attack “the others” than to attack rivals of their own species. If the food sources become scarce, they may attempt to intimidate their peer herd out of the area instead of going to war with them. But food shortages (sometimes caused by overpopulation and not by drought) do cause these two creatures to go to war.

This does not mean that either of these creatures are “evil”, no matter what your game rules require for two groups to battle each other. Both herds are led by stallions who want to provide the most food they can for their families. If there is enough food and water, they can live in peace with the other breed.

## THE SOUNDING BOARD

### Royal Divinity

What are the myths about your royal lines? This is more likely one of those things you have thought about. Do they have the blood of dragons in their line? Descended from the gods? Talk to angels? Have the power of an ancient line of magic? What, besides being royalty, sets them apart from the rest of their race?

The royals and the nobles always want the people to be completely terrified of them, to know that they are different and cannot be equaled. So what stories do they tell? The myths can be powerful, especially if the people believe them. Even if they don't, the myths serve as a means of inspiring the people. You don't need to believe in Pegasus and Bellerophon to find them majestic or at least "cool". Think of the art. Think of the stories and the songs.



Think too of the rivalries. Is one noble house descended from the constellation of the cobra and another use the mongoose in their crest? OK, that was too blatant. Maybe the dragon and the angels? You get the point. Sometimes the myths are used to tell the truth, when the

truth cannot be spoken. Then again, it is a fantasy world. Maybe the king really is descended from dragons.

Does it matter? In a high fantasy game - absolutely! Kings with even a little divine blood should have serious advantages when trying to get the attention of the gods. Royals with dragon blood may be immune to fire. (Not all of the family as many people have seen in a popular TV show.) The noble line protected by the spitting cobra may be immune to poisons. The ideas for having a little "family magic" are countless.

Let's take a completely different approach - TREASURE! A royal family that has been protected by unicorns will have ivory unicorn statues throughout their holdings. Or they will have paintings of the famous unicorn sightings. Or they will have silver unicorns inlaid into their gold signet rings. Or they will have whatever wood is closest to white inlaid into their tables in the form of a unicorn. Their staves will have unicorn heads. Their swords will have unicorn pommels. Let's go with "all of the above". I am unquestionably a fan of cool treasure, and ideas do not always just fall out of the skies. Knowing the heraldic symbols and legends of the locals gives you countless ideas for cool, artistic treasures; treasures that hopefully the players will appreciate, right before they turn them in for a boring number of coins.

### Animals of Fletnern

In a previous post, I mentioned that simply saying "horses" is not a sufficient answer. So what are you to do? Well, I thought about horses (and related animals) when I was first crafting my world of Fletnern. Link to this page to see some of the animals I established. Obviously this is not all of them. In fact, I have charts for most of the regions of the world listing the various different types of animals there. Each area needs predators (including an apex predator who is often a "monster"), as well as herbivores that do not entirely interfere with each other and other prey animals. It was fun for me to do this a couple of times, but trying to get this done for all the regions has proven more work than I have found the time (and will) for. For example - where I have marsupials, there are no wolves, only animals based on some of the extinct marsupial carnivores. Also, since my Central Plains region has relatively few wooded areas, I felt deer animals (including moose or elk) were the wrong way to go, but I wanted the Barons of the Council to be big game hunters, so I moved the kudo into the Central Plains. No reason I can't do that in my world. It makes for a little bit of fun confusion, plus, and this is great for most of you GMs: If you can say to the players, "No, there are no deer in the Central Plains. The major hunting animal in the Central Plains is the various kudo," then your players get the feeling (right or wrong) that you know everything about your world and they get a little impressed or intimidated. OK, probably an exaggeration, but it is kind

of impressive when you know stuff like that. It makes the whole thing that much more real.

Why did I do all of this? First, because I was sick of people saying they wanted to buy a “draft” horse. Could a Clydesdale be a draft horse or a war horse? and if so, why were they different prices? (well trained etc., but that is not what this one is about) But also (second), I was working on the continent of Hughijen and needed to explain why the dragons could survive around the Dragon Lakes. At first I said they were raiding the Anglic regions for cattle, but that did not entirely make sense. Eventually the Angles would move their ranches farther and farther from the Lakes in order to make it too far for the dragons to range for food. (Which they did.) And the idea of dragons eating mountain goats annoyed me to no end. It seemed undignified. Well, the region is known as “the Dragon Lakes”, so are they fishing those lakes? Why not? Honestly, it was on my honeymoon (in Alaska) that I saw what can only be described as a vortex of eagles - probably 90-120 - circling together and taking turns diving into one area and coming out with fish. There must have been a massive school of fish right there, because the eagles (some bald, some golden, many I could not identify from the distance) just kept hitting it and then flying off with fish. Why couldn't the dragons do that too? OK, not the vortex thing, just getting tons of fish. But I did have to add some big freshwater fish to the lake, but with a little study on Lake Superior, that was pretty easy.

OK - for you gold farmers out there who see absolutely no point to this post: Here is what you can take away from figuring out what the dragons eat: You now can figure out where they fly to hunt (from their caves to the lakes). You can now figure out that an old dragon (let's say sick because we know that other game thinks elderly dragons are unstoppable) unable to compete with the others for fish might be forced to move his lair into the Anglic cattle regions, making him a target of the next adventuring party. (This really makes me think of Shere Khan. If you haven't actually read Jungle Book - you don't know what you're missing. I love Disney, but the book is phenomenal and not necessarily for kids.) Since you know what the dragons are eating, you can sort of think of some of the treasure and garbage that would be found in their lairs - fish bones, perhaps caviar that might still be fresh enough to be of value, fresh water pearls, are there any fresh water monsters in your game?, don't forget that there probably would be some mountain goats and their horns, etc. left here too, because of geography, in Fletnern, this leads to the strong possibility of a unicorn horn or two as well. I know I keep pounding on the idea, but figuring out the mundane really does set you up to know things that spawn adventures and help you while you're writing them!

Added Comment: I did not think this deserved an extra post, but notice the way I keep ending my sentences in prepositions? I have heard people say that this is

indicative of the fact that I grew up in the Midwest, maybe even the northern Illinois/southern Wisconsin area. I don't notice it, but it might stand out to you guys, especially those of you from Canada or the UK. No, I have not developed these types of regional dialects for Fletnern, but it would be really cool if you did stuff like that for your world. I have (as GM) assumed that these things existed and allowed really smart guys to use it: The bartender asks you if you're from the Triad, because the only folks who pronounce that word like that are all from the Triad. Anyway, that's why Locality skills in **LEGEND QUEST** aid in Language skills.

### Getting to Work (literally)

We have talked about getting to and from work in your fantasy world and how that differs for the common folk and adventurers. If you look at that idea and say “on a horse”, you've screwed it up. Now, you can start with “on a horse”, but then you have to think about a number of things: If people are riding horses to and from work in a major city, where do they “park” them? Where do they park them at home? Are there that many stables in major cities? How do they feed all these horses? Do the wagons filled with hay, straw (for bedding) and oats wander the



streets? Do the clean up wagons collect the horse manure at night? Can simply craftsmen afford to own horses (I mean the feeding and housing, not buying a cheap one)?

OK - So I can't just say you're doing it wrong and not offer the way to do it right. Honestly, this has been an issue with me from the first time I started mapping out the city of Rhum (about 35 years ago). I had residential neighborhoods in one part of the city and industrial stuff in another. Now I have shifted things around (before publication) and I have sort of surrounded the more industrial area with residential neighborhoods, so the workers don't have to walk more than 10-20 minutes to get to work. I think that's pretty reasonable. That covers the factory workers, and yes, I have factories in my fantasy world. Maybe not what you are thinking, but breweries, brick makers, ceramics factories where some guys set up the clay, some throw the items, and others fire them in the kilns. Most of the other craftsmen live very close to their shops - often above them.

But I also had an issue with the Farmers' Market. The farmers don't live in the city, so how do they maintain their farms, get to and work in the market, and get home at night before the gates close? I had to think about that one a lot! I surrounded the city with some smaller farms, so that farmers could still get into the city and back home every day. I started altering who was in the market - not the farmer himself, but instead his wife or daughter. I also had to start thinking about the concept that farmers in fantasy worlds aren't selling watermelons all year long, just at the end of summer. So some of the Farmers' Market stalls are empty on certain days. This also led me to start thinking about things like: pickled vegetables, fruit preserves, apple cider and other things farmers would sell to get people through the winter; the fact that there probably was no fresh milk in cities without refrigeration; and how do farmers make all of their money at one time of the year (after harvest) and yet survive the rest of the year hopefully avoiding bandits.

OK - That's not so bad for the common folks, but how does this affect the adventuring party? A couple of minor points: I now know that near the city are small farms, while away from the city are the huge plantations. For Rhum, I knew this was barley and other cereal plantations, but before thinking it through I did not think that the plantations could afford to be at a distance, while the small farmers could not. In thinking about the adventurers "getting to work", I had to make sure that I had established roads that go from one city to the next. I had that. I had to think about what happens when a slow moving caravan is blocking the road, either for another slow moving caravan or for the fast moving adventurers. OK, I came up with the proper etiquette for that. I had to figure out how long it takes to get from one city to the next. Ok, maybe I didn't have to do this, but wasting game session time trying to figure out stuff like this is not where I want to be, so I made up a chart for my world.

What else? hundreds of things! Do your roads have signs that direct travelers to the next city or town on the roads? How good are the roads? Who maintains the roads? Are there tolls? How bad are the bandits in different sections? Why are there bandits in the different sections? What's wrong with those governments or are those just lawless parts of the world? Where do people eat and sleep along the way? Are there inns or campgrounds? How safe are these? How expensive are these? How do the inns get their food and supplies? Does it come in on caravans or from locals, and does that make a difference? Probably makes a big difference in pricing. What do people ride? Horse is not specific enough. Mules, Donkeys, Horses, Ponies, something far more fantastic? If someone is riding a carnivorous steed, can the inns help them? What happens if someone is using a flying steed? Are there laws about flying over certain places - I'm thinking mainly city walls here? What different breeds of horses are there and what are they used for? Are the adventurers riding war horses, riding horses or draft horses and what is the difference in traveling? Should they be riding one type of horse and trailing their battle steed? What do they haul their stuff in? Do they wear armor in the saddle while traveling? Where are they getting their water from and does it cause them any issues? Can they let their horse munch on grass along the way or does that upset the locals?

OK, we're starting to beat a dead horse here, yeah pun intended even though it wasn't a very good one. You can have one of two attitudes towards that list of questions: 1) No one cares about the mundane stuff or 2) You know I hadn't thought about some of that stuff before, but there's something in there that sparks an idea for me. Maybe it was the idea of a carnivorous steed causing trouble at an inn or a water elemental causing trouble at an important watering hole, but there are adventures mixed in with the mundane stuff. Every time I think through the mundane stuff, I come up with the foundations of adventures, and I think good GMs do the same. Otherwise you may as well be playing some MMO.

### **Common NPC Ideas (and why you care)**

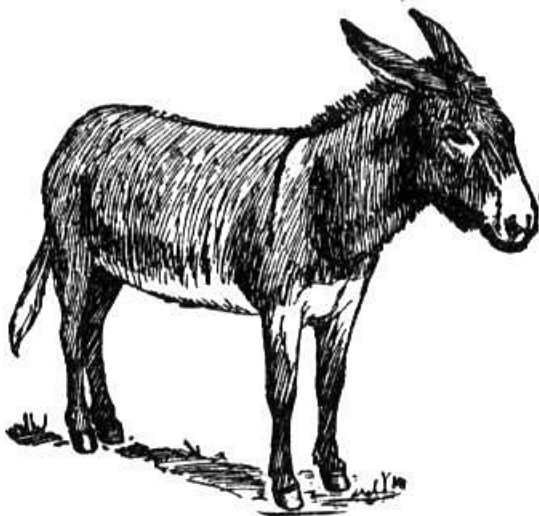
You might be wondering why you care about NPCs that aren't enemies to be killed. Let's run some examples:

Non-Role-Playing Game - The player wants to buy a war horse. He looks at the equipment chart and it says a warhorse is 200 "money". He subtracts 200 from his money and writes down a warhorse on his character sheet. He gives his war horse the maximum attributes allowed by the game rules and feels justified in doing so because he paid 200, where a "riding horse" is only 100. Oh, and he probably never paid for the saddle, tack or other requirements, nor did he ever bother to figure out how much it would take to feed and stable said warhorse. He's only good with game money when it is being added to his character sheet.



Minimalistic Role-Playing Game - The player tells the GM he wants to buy a warhorse. GM looks at the book and sees that it costs 200. GM rolls (or has player roll) a Scrounging skill task and the roll shows a success. So the GM says the PC has found a war horse in town. The two write down how much the saddle and gear will cost, assuming that the horse seller sells saddles and gear as well. Depending on how good the Scrounging roll was, the GM assigns some reasonable stats to the horse, and they go on, forgetting about the war horse, unless the PC is charging someone in combat.

Far Better Role-Playing Game - The player tells the GM he wants to buy a warhorse. The GM asks him what he's looking for: highly trained, young, huge, strong, mare, stallion, gelding? The GM knows that war horses aren't just sitting around in small towns, so he makes the player roll a highly modified (downward) Scrounging task, and it is a failure. GM says, wait until you're back in the big city.



Next week and the party is back in the big city. Player reminds the GM, but misses this roll too. So the PC goes to the stable near his apartment and asks the GM about the stable hands. GM improvises that there is one who is seemingly in charge, young guy about 20-22, reasonably fit, laid back. "Johnnie" So the PC talks to Johnnie (Carousing roll - success), and Johnnie likes the PC. PC says, I'm looking for a war horse and gives him the same kind of specs they talked about last week. Strength more important than size, a good, compact, reasonably well trained war horse. Johnnie says, I don't know of any in town right now, but let me ask around. PC tips Johnnie nicely, and Johnnie likes him even more. GM rolls Scrounging for Johnnie. Johnnie succeeds, because he really knows this town and the horse traders in it. The next game day (probably same gaming session), GM tells PC that Johnnie has found him his horse. Johnnie and the PC go over to the horse trader and Johnnie helps him negotiate the price down a little. But this is an excellent

war horse - near max attributes. They settle on 275 for the horse. On the way back to the stable and apartment, Johnnie stops by a tack shop and the two pick out the best war saddle, tack and saddle bags for the horse and the adventurer. PC goes back to his apartment, and Johnnie makes sure the horse is comfy in the stable he runs.

How is this better? Well, first off, now it is a role-playing game, because the player has to role-play important things, and buying a war horse is a pretty important thing. If any of you bought a car by simply showing up at the dealership, taking the first one you saw where you liked the color, and paid cash flat out for it, then you won't understand. The remaining 99.999% of us know that this is a big deal. The player now knows what kind of horse he has. He knows what kind of tack he has. This is important because otherwise the player will choose whatever is best for him later on in the campaign when something here becomes material. You know it! You probably did it too.

But what else? Well the player now has a contact - Johnnie the stablehand. When the PC returns from missions, he can say - I drop my warhorse off with Johnnie, and both PC and GM know where the horse is and how it is being maintained. This method costs the PC more. He wasn't able to cheat on the tack. He is going to have to pay to feed the horse and stable it, though Johnnie might make that a little easier on him.

A lot of gold farmers are out there right now rolling their eyes and thinking, "See, this is stupid. They just wasted money that they didn't need to." OK, we'll ignore that the other way is cheating and focus on game play. It's six months (real time or game time) later and the city is under attack. Does the gold farmer say, I get on my armor, I get on my war horse and I ride to where there is fighting? Do GM's allow that? When you don't know where the stable is, you can't let them get to the war horse. Even if you did, the gold farmer would need to saddle and prep his horse on his own, where the guy who role-played with Johnnie might be able to assume that Johnnie got the warhorse all prepped for him, saving precious combat turns. Outside of a fight, Johnnie can also be a source of information, the victim of a crime and therefore the reason for a new mission, getting married to allow the city life to appear as if it is going on with or without the PCs.

Look, I'm not against war games. If you want to spend a certain number of points, build a military unit and then test strategies by battling other military units, by all means! But we're talking about role-playing games here. Seems like there should be some role-playing.

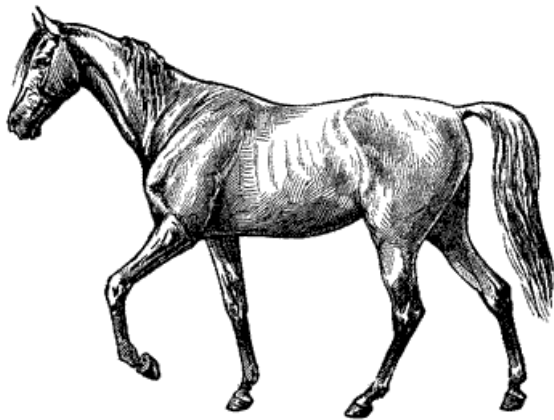
### Is a horse just a horse?

The time will come when as a GM (or a player) you just want to call something a horse. You don't want to call it by the name of a breed, or what it does, or whatever. It's a horse. It's probably a "mutt" horse and thus of no particular breed anyway. It's just a horse!

And that's OK! Look, we have all sorts of breed names for horses. We have stats for horses, and stronger or faster horses are going to be better than average horses. When you're getting deep into cavalry battles, these types of details can be important. But guess what - It doesn't always matter. Sometimes a horse is just a horse and not a Rairbridair heavy draft horse.

This is true of far more than just horses. There is a point at which all the details we seem to be including in everything we publish are in the way. We give our customers as much detail as we can cram into a book, but we do so hoping that GMs are not going to bother getting into that much detail with their players.

Case in point - The party is walking down the road and sees a farmer leaning on the fence. They say, "Which way to Rhum?" and the farmer points over his right shoulder. That should be the end of that encounter! The party does not need to know that Benjamin Mackeresson is having trouble with his wife or that his children are now 38, 37 and 34, or that he enjoys fishing and rye whiskies. They don't need to know that the horse in the field is his plow horse, or that he bought it six years ago for 80sc and a promise of six dozen eggs. Even if we put all of that in one of our books, don't use it! It's there in case the party comes down the road and says, "Our friend will die if you don't sell us your horse right now so he can be raced to the nearest town." Now the GM has an idea of what Ben thinks the horse is worth. Or if they say, "Hey, what's your name?" "What do you do around here? We're looking for someone willing to make us dinner for a gold coin - how good a cook is your wife?" OK, hopefully our level of detail makes more sense that that, but details are not always necessary.



There are different styles of play, and there are different players. Some role players want to know what the farmers are wearing, and some couldn't care less that the farmers exist. Overdoing the detail is a mood killer! We've mentioned it before, but I will never forget the time (I was playing, not GMing), that upon arriving in town, the party wanted to go into the bar. We saw the sign with the beer mug and went in - or so we thought.

The GM kept describing the door to us. We wanted to know our characters were inside drinking and flirting with barmaids and he kept telling us the dimensions of the door, what wood it was made of, how the bolts held it together. Don't be that guy! Your players will never let you live it down, and the entire session that night was a mess.

### **Horses, deer or antelope? Why world building matters**

A sane GM would ask why I spend so much time figuring out things like cuisine, clothing fashions, and art. The quick answer is simple: Because this is high fantasy.

This is high fantasy. There are orcs, elves, dwarves and far crazier creatures like centaurs, vampires, and minotaurs, not to mention dragons and giants. Are orcs humans with green skin? Are elves humans with pointy ears? Are dwarves short humans with beards? If so, what is the point of even having them? If this is high fantasy, then the subtle differences between a human and an elf will have to have an impact on their culture and their lifestyles.

Let me take the easiest first: animal locations. I expect that took you off guard, but I think it has the biggest impact on everything. There were no horses on the continent that the titans (and giants, and humans, and halflings) came from. So there were no cavalry units in the days where the titans ruled. That makes sense, because there aren't any giant or titan sized horses on my world. Horses (all equines) come from Hughijen. Once humans moved to Hughijen, they started domesticating horses and pretty quickly formed cavalry units. Actually they started with horse riding explorers because they needed to cover ground quickly, but an explorer with a bow is a soldier, or an adventurer.

So horses from Hughijen, antelope from Drentae, and deer from Koaluckssie. Ignoring the domestication of the horses, these are relatively similar animals - large herbivores that act as prey animals for large carnivores or packs of carnivores. But the elves came from Koaluckssie (that is a hugely long story and greatly debated). So did they domesticate deer and use them as steeds? Yes, they did. Steeds rarely, but beasts of burden more commonly. But the elves don't plow fields, so the idea of a beast of burden should probably only be seen as a pack animal and not as a vehicle engine.

This becomes important in that all of the horses on Drentae were imported at some point. Sure, there are wild horses there, but they are like the American mustangs - descended from domesticated horses that escaped. There were thousands of years in which this could have happened, not just the several hundred Earth had, so it is entirely plausible. But the dominant prey animal on Drentae is the antelope. So when the Barons

of the Council of Baronies go hunting, they are going out after antelope, not deer.

Does it matter? Well, let me get into the whole 'they are all different' thing again. The elves actually imported deer so they would have something to use as pack animals and to hunt. So an elven adventurer will most likely have venison pemmican as the meat of his rations. A Velesan from Parnania (where they breed hogs) would have pork sausage or salt pork. From the Council? beef jerky. From Scaret or Brinston? those are sea ports, so expect to have salted fish. Does it matter? Maybe not, but there is a difference between humans and elves, and between different humans.

What else? Well, the Lats live farther south and have trouble growing "bread wheat". So they grow "pasta wheat". So while a Rhoric will likely have hard tack in his rations bag, a Lat is going to have dried pasta. Meanwhile, the dwarves have trouble growing any grains, and most of theirs are imported (traded for metal goods). Because of this, their government basically mills and blends the various grains together to form a more uniform "meal" (because they are communist and believe in that sort of uniformity). Meanwhile, the Bortens are growing corn and having cornmeal mush for their morning meal. They make too much so that when lunch rolls around, they shape the leftovers into patties and fry them up.

Does it matter? Again - they are different. The cultures are different. If you come from Traigar, you probably drink mead. If you're Rhoric, you drink beer. Lat = red wine; Marilick = white wine. but how does this affect the games?

Here are some ways this all affects the games: The Rhorics love cinnamon, but it doesn't grow anywhere near them. So caravans transport the cinnamon from Caratok to Rhum and Snobist (and Rock Cove). Now you have an idea of what might be on a caravan. Silks come from the Quassim Islands and Dalavar. Now you know what might be on the ships crossing the oceans. Knowing imports and exports often helps GMs design guard quests.

An antler handled knife made in Forsbury will be from an antelope, while in Slyvania it would be from a deer. This changes the look and feel of the weapons and tools. Further, steel has become scarce in the southern central region, so Bortens from Scaret have turned to using bronze weapons in many cases. The elves don't typically do metal crafting, so they are using various alternatives, including flint tipped arrows and ironwood (semi-magical tress with the strength and durability of iron or low grade steel) maces.

This same lack of steel production in some areas leads to trade (again with the caravans and ships), but it also makes getting massive steel armors very rare in towns like Garnock and Scaret. So their militaries are being outfitted in old armors that have been "repaired" or

recycled or in leathers. But since leather is not as good as steel, they are boiling the leathers and looking for alternatives, like dragon hides. The orcs have no looms to speak of, so they are fully into wearing hides and leathers whether for war or normal use. They also have the dragon hides and in some cases are trading them to Garnock. Are we getting a little closer to the things you care about now?

The best emeralds in the world come from the jungles in the south, but they're incredibly treacherous and there is no organized trade. Sounds like a good mission for adventurers, huh? But the elves do mine emeralds, lower quality emeralds. Would the elves take action against someone trying to establish a trade in higher quality emeralds? That would make for some good adventuring ideas!

There is a cartel out of Forsbury that is bringing in wagonloads of ivory from the north. Mastodons in the far north and elephants in the far south. Elephant ivory is better (whiter - and that's not racist), but rarer. Will someone try to compete with her? And what trouble will they run into that far south?

The Gold Mountains no longer contain gold, but they do still have silver mines. So most of the gold was mined by the dwarves and transported to their current location in the north, while the orcs are mining silver in the south. So you're not going to find orc chieftains decked out with gold chains or other gold jewelry unless they found some sort of dwarven cache left behind. So if you find an orc with lots of gold chains, does that lead to a much bigger exploration mission to figure out where he got it from?

The point is this: There should be a difference between the cultures of tropical and temperate peoples. There should be a difference between dwarves and elves and humans, and not just a couple of tweaks to what their attributes are. These differences will not only serve to make the different races and ethnicities more fun to learn about, but will help the GM drive new missions and develop characters, their gear, and their loot. If characters, gear and loot aren't important to your game, then you and I are playing very different games.



# LIFESTYLES OF THE MAGICAL AND MUNDANE

## The Cost of a Horse

Guess what? Horses are really expensive. Not the buying of horses that can actually be sort of cheap. It is the maintenance costs of a horse that are expensive. How expensive? Well, we're about to get into that.

### Horseshoes:

Apparently, we tried to cut some corners on space and explanation in *Grain Into Gold* when it came to horseshoes. This led at least one purchaser into misunderstanding and giving us a bad review. Fortunately, we were able to get in touch with him, point out a misunderstanding or two and he pulled back his bad review. Well, good, but let's talk shoes for a second, so you don't get confused.

First, horse shoes wear out. They need to be replaced. How quickly depends on the use of the horse and the type of surface they are on most of the time. For instances, cobblestones wear out shoes faster than dirt roads - makes sense, right?

But whether the shoes wear out or not, a horse should see a farrier about every six to eight weeks. Even if the horse has been wandering around a pasture the whole time, the shoe may not need to be replaced, but it should be refit, the hoof filed down, and checked for any damage or disease. So a visit from the farrier costs how much? Well, a farrier is a fairly basic smith and makes 10sc per day. If he has to come out to the farm and check the horses there (house call), it's going to be a minimum of two hours to get out there, check the horse, and then get home. So figure 2sc for a two hour visit. If he's coming to check four horses, well checking the horse only takes 30 minutes, once he's set up, so now figure 30 minutes to get there, 30 minutes to set-up (and talk to the horse owner - about work or the weather), 30 minutes per horses, and 30 minutes to get home. So one horse is two hours, and four horses are three and a half hours. In a more urban environment, everything costs more, but the farrier has an easier time getting around and far more customers to hit. So his travel times are reduced, but his house call fee will remain about the same or 1.5sc for a house call. If the farrier is coming to a stable, this cost largely goes away as he is hitting a large number of horses all at once. If he has to come back to the stable every day due to poor planning on someone's part, he will charge the travel fee.

OK, so that's 1.5sc for a house call and 0.5sc for a trim and re-shoe. But what if you're getting a full new set of shoes? Well, a full shoeing of a horse is two hours of work on its own, so 2sc. See how easy it is if they all would just make 10sc per day? But shoeing a horse is



more about the shoes than the farrier, because 10 pounds of steel is expensive.

10lbs? Yep! Horseshoes weigh two and a half pounds each, so times four and you have ten pounds of steel. Anyone who read the *All About Dwarves* edition learned the difference between bloomeries and foundries. We expect that farriers are getting their metals from foundries who can produce bars of steel roughly the proper dimensions and lengths to be turned into horse shoes. The farrier still needs to shape them properly, but this is vastly better than trying to hammer a horse shoe shape out of a spherical mass of metal.

Two and a half pounds of steel cost 3sc (at source) and 4sc (in the city). Taking a generic steel bar and transforming it into a horse shoe takes about an hour of the blacksmith's time. Admittedly, he is most likely doing this on days he does not have a house call or on days too rainy to easily get out to customers, but he does expect to be paid for this work. So this does work out rather easily to horseshoes running 4sc in a rural location and 5sc in an urban location - assuming that steel is purchased here and not some odd import.

Is that it? Well it can be, but people are typically cheap! Solid steel horseshoes on a light riding horse or pony? Is there a need for that? Well, no. Certainly not in all circumstances. So what can we do? Well, iron seems too weak and malleable to use for actual horseshoes (though most decorative shoes would be cast iron). But "low steel" does work. So the materials for low steel shoes (at 2.5lbs) run 2.1sc at source or 2.8sc city. Add the extra 1sc for the farrier's work, just like the other shoes.

But wait, there's more. Small horses or ponies would use smaller shoes. Draft horses, being that much heavier than "normal" horses would need heavier shoes. Rather than narratively go through all of this, let's put in a chart. But when should you consider low steel vs.

	Horse		Shoe			Steel		Low Steel		
	Wt.	Wt.	Rural	City	Trade-In	Rural	City	Trade-In		
Farrier House Call			1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5			
Trimming			0.5	0.5		0.5	0.5			
Re-shoeing			0.5	0.5		0.5	0.5			
Shoeing			2.0	2.0		2.0	2.0			
Pony/small	400-600	1.25	2.5	3.0	1.3	2.1	2.4	0.9		
Small horse	600-900	1.875	3.3	4.0	1.9	2.6	3.1	1.3		
Standard	900-1100	2.5	4.0	5.0	2.5	3.1	3.8	1.8		
Draft	1100-1400	3	4.6	5.8	3.0	3.5	4.4	2.1		
Draft, heavy	1400-1700	4	5.8	7.4	4.0	4.4	5.5	2.8		
Draft, exceptional	1700-2200	5	7.0	9.0	5.0	5.2	6.6	3.5		
War Shoes	1250-1750	5	7.0	9.0	5.0	5.2	6.6	3.5		
Nails, sm. (28)	400-900		2.0	2.1	0.25					
Nails, std. (28)	900-1100		2.1	2.2	0.3					
Nails, hvy (28)	1100-2200		2.2	2.3	0.45					

Feed:

How much a horse eats depends on how big it is and how much work it does. Again - that should make sense. A war horse sitting in a stable all day is going to eat more than a riding horse sitting in a stable all day. So the question is: how much?



Well, unlike cattle, horses eat oats, not just grass / hay. That means you cannot just leave a horse outside and expect it to feed itself. This really is the reason that horses are expensive! So let's do some math: oats cost 0.20sc p/pound, but are very common so they are only 0.25sc p/lb in the city. We are assuming that these horses are not being put out to pasture (because they are in a city), so you also need to give them hay. Hay is only 0.013sc p/lb so it's

pretty cheap. Again, hay is very common and therefore competition keeps it down around 0.016sc in the city. But how much do they eat?

steel? It depends on what the surface the horse will be walking on. If the horse will be on a paved road, probably steel. If only on dirt, low steel may work. But we'll assume that the heaviest horses need steel no matter what. Oh, and "war horseshoes" - war horses need steel shoes made in a different way in order to protect their hooves in case they kick someone during a battle, especially if that target is armored.

What keeps the shoes on? Nails. Now a nail maker is close to the bottom of the barrel when it comes to smiths. These guys crank out nails all day long, but most farriers are going to want to make the nails themselves. Each shoe takes seven nails, so shoeing a horse takes 28. A farrier can knock out nails pretty quickly, but 28 horseshoe nails are still going to run about 2.2sc.

In case we weren't clear - "Standard" is basically for riding horses and probably for your everyday taxi cab driving horses.

New shoes are needed every farrier visit if the horse is continuously used on a paved road, every other if used on dirt roads or less consistent use, and every third visit if typically stabled.

Don't worry - We're going to sum everything up at the end!

	Weight	Stabled		Working	
		Oats	Hay	Oats	Hay
Donkey	500	1.0	9.0	2.0	9.0
Donkey, heavy	900	2.5	16.0	5.0	16.0
Donkey, light	350	0.7	6.3	1.4	6.3
Horse, draft	1200	6.0	15.0	12.0	15.0
Horse, draft exceptional	1800	12.0	20.0	25.0	20.0
Horse, heavy draft	1600	10.0	17.0	20.0	17.0
Horse, riding	1000	5.0	12.0	9.0	12.0
Horse, war	1500	7.0	17.0	14.0	17.0
Mule	1100	5.0	13.0	10.0	13.0
Pony, short	500	2.3	6.0	4.5	6.0
Pony, tall	800	3.5	9.6	7.0	9.6
Pegasus	850	5.0	12.0	12.0	15.0
Unicorn	675	2.5	16.0	5.0	16.0

*(all amounts shown in pounds)*

	source		city		farm	
	stable	work	stable	work	stable	work
Donkey	0.30	0.50	0.40	0.65	0.20	0.40
Donkey, heavy	0.70	1.20	0.90	1.50	0.50	1.00
Donkey, light	0.25	0.40	0.30	0.50	0.15	0.30
Horse, draft	1.40	2.60	1.75	3.25	1.20	2.40
Horse, draft exceptional	2.75	5.25	3.40	6.50	2.40	5.00
Horse, heavy draft	2.30	4.25	2.75	5.30	2.00	4.00
Horse, riding	1.20	2.00	1.50	2.50	1.00	1.80
Horse, war	1.60	3.00	2.00	3.75	1.40	2.80
Mule	1.20	2.20	1.50	2.70	1.00	2.00
Pony, short	0.50	1.00	0.65	1.25	0.45	0.90
Pony, tall	0.80	1.50	1.00	1.90	0.70	1.40
Pegasus	1.20	2.60	1.50	3.25	1.00	2.40
Unicorn	0.70	1.25	0.90	1.50	0.50	1.00

*(all amounts shown in silver coins)*

With a little bit of rounding, those weights turn into this chart of costs.

So what's the differences? Well, "source" assumes that the feed is purchased from a farmer and delivered to a site outside of the city. "City" assumes the feed is purchased inside the city. "Farm" assumes that the owner is buying the oats outside the city and the horse has a sizable pasture in which to wander and eat fresh grass. Any horse put out to pasture should probably be overseen by someone with a Ranching skill or at least an Animal Handling skill. This is mainly because horses are gluttons and will happily eat themselves sick given the chance. In fact at all times, a horse should be overseen by someone with some knowledge, to avoid some of the little problems that the unskilled may not be thinking about.

#### Stables:

OK, so that's shoes, food, what's next? Stables - shelter or lodging. If your home has a stable built in the back and you are taking care of the horse yourself, then you don't have to pay, but most adventurers will enter a city and stay at an inn, and need to stable their animal(s). What do stables offer? Well, typically they will feed and water the horse for you, so you don't have to take the time to do that. They keep the stall clean and covered in straw, so again - you don't have to do that.

After that, it starts to vary. A low cost stable will do only that - feed, water and muck (well, most muck). But you get what you pay for. A more standard stable will groom the horse and exercise it, though probably only every other day. A good stable will have more staff and make certain the horse is properly groomed, exercised, and keep good track of eating habits and health.

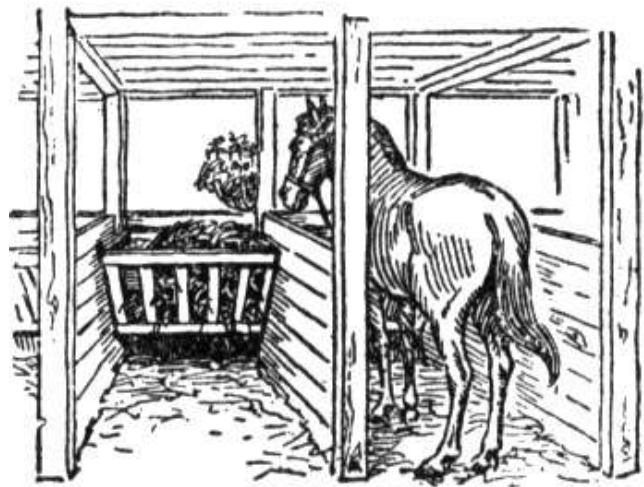
What's the pay-off? What does the horse owner get for better care and treatment? Mainly the good health of

the horse. The better the care, the less likely the horse is to catch a disease. Even if that disease is something the horse can recover from, not being able to use your horse at a particular time because it is sick can have a huge impact.

So how do we figure these costs? Well, the good stables are going to have one groom for every four horses. A stable hand only makes 6sc p/ day, though they are often allowed to sleep in the hayloft, so their expenses are going to be a bit lower. A moderate stable will assign one stable hand to up to eight horses, and a low rent stable will have one stable boy for twelve horses. Did you notice how we changed the vocabulary there? Fancy stable hands

are "grooms". Low rent stable hands are "boys". It does matter where you work!

But we need to complicate things a little bit too! On top of the stable hand(s), you need a stable manager. This guy needs to deal with customers, order feed and straw, supervise the workers, and all the extra stuff. This means that he can only handle half as many horses, on top of everything else he's expected to do, or 2, 4, or 6. He makes 9sc per day.



So math: We assume most public stables will be large enough to have three stable hands reporting to the manager. So the high end is  $9+(3 \times 6) = 27sc$  split amongst 14 horses. Before you run off thinking this means you split that money evenly, it depends on whether all the stalls are filled every day. Typically, they won't be. The max capacity is 14, but the average number of horses in there might be 10. Plus someone owns the stable and wants something for that. We

assume that an average stable will have an average occupancy of 2/3rds max capacity.

Stables	High	Medium	Low
Manager	9.0	9.0	9.0
Stablehands	18.0	18.0	18.0
Owner	8.0	6.0	4.0
	35.0	33.0	31.0
Max Horses	14	28	42
Ave Horse	10	19	28
Stable Fee	3.50	1.75	1.10
Monthly	100	50	30

*(all amounts shown in silver coins)*

There are a lot of factors here! Are you in a city or the countryside? Is the animal working or stabled? What type of stable do you have him in? Trying to keep all this easy, we've added up the costs of food, shelter and "clothing" (shoes) for a horse. There are more costs than this, but they are typically smaller, things like buying a brush, or blanket, etc. So here are what we consider to be the most likely set of costs:

	Feed	Stable	Shoes	Total
Stabling, one night, small town inn, riding horse, worked: ridden all day	2.0	1.0	0.00	3
Stabling, one night, city inn, riding horse, worked: ridden all day	2.4	1.75	0.00	4.25
Stabling, one month, horse ranch, riding horse, stabled	34.7	50.0	0.50	85
Stabling, one month, city stable, riding horse, stabled	43.3	50.0	0.50	94
Stabling, one night, small town inn, war horse, worked: ridden all day	3.0	1.0	0.00	4
Stabling, one night, city inn, war horse, worked: ridden all day	3.8	1.75	0.00	5.50
Stabling, one month, horse ranch, war horse, stabled	48.6	50.0	0.50	100
Stabling, one month, city stable, war horse, stabled	60.7	50.0	0.50	110

This is the type of information that Lifestyles was intended to provide - the actual day to day costs to adventurers when they aren't out adventuring. We don't always get straight into that, but hopefully this one is of use to players and game masters.

## NEWS OF FLETNERN

Not every rumor or news story around town has to be related directly to the adventure the players are working. In fact, there should be vastly more going on in town than concerns the party. But these extra news stories and possible red herrings can be difficult to generate. We're going to be adding more and more of these as Small Bites goes on. After all, much of the earlier news stories were more historic. Now that you know the history, you can see some of the current events!

### The Unicorn Graveyard

#### Publicly Known:

Some of the unicorn poachers located a unicorn graveyard. It is just like the elephant graveyard in the Southern Plains, but only for unicorns. Alongside a river, there is a spot where dozens if not hundreds of unicorn skeletons are just lying in the sun, all with their horns still attached.

#### Privately Known:

The so-called unicorn graveyard does exist, but it is nothing like what people think. It is actually a major poacher camp that was destroyed decades ago, but the elven wardens just left all the stacked up bones and horns where they were. They constantly monitor the site and use it as bait for other poachers.

The problem is that it has been reported by several groups and as such it is starting to act as a draw to other poachers. With no contacts in the outside world, the wardens have no idea that their bait is working a little too well.

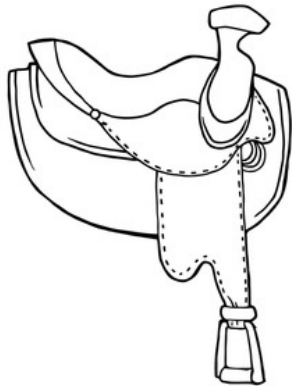
There have been disagreements between the wardens about what to do with confiscated items. Some believe they should be destroyed to prevent these holy objects from being "misused". Other feel that they should be left where they are in reverence to the fallen spiritual creatures. Still others feel that once the animal has been killed, using the items themselves is a way that they can honor the fallen creature.

For now - The wardens who patrol the site of the "unicorn graveyard" insist that it will remain where it is as it is as bait for other "evil doers". Until the other wardens are willing to battle each other over these beliefs, the camp will stay as it is.

### A Boy and A Horse

#### Publicly Known:

In Forsbury, the Masterhill Cartel has hired a new messenger. No one would take any notice of this news, except for the fact that the boy is riding an absolutely enormous, white Cessernant stallion.



#### Privately Known:

The boy's name is Chet. He claims to be 14 but is actually 11. His mother has taken ill, and he went out to find work in order to support the two of them. Who or where his father is is unknown. He was a teamster who lived with Chet's mother Ullandia for about a year before disappearing once he realized she was pregnant.

The stable master did not want to hire the kid, but he could tell the kid was desperate, so he hired him on as a stablehand. It only took a matter of days to see the kid had an affinity for horses. Chet was the only person that the huge Cessnant would allow to clean his stall while he was still in there. In fact, the horse was the reason there was a stablehand job open; the horse had kicked and broken the leg of the previous stablehand.

The horse is named White Ember and was purchased to be used by the various messengers that worked for the cartel. With the castle being about three miles north of the cartel's headquarters, there is a need for strong, fast horses who can work long hours. White Ember seemed perfect. But the horse is not truly broken. While others can and have ridden him, White Ember has been an extremely finicky horse.

They did not foolishly risk Chet with White Ember. Upon seeing that the two were bonding, they tried to see if Chet could ride the horse under strict conditions in the stable's yard. They tried giving the two more and more freedom, and Chet proved that he was a horseman savant. Not only that, but the bond the two share allows Chet to push White Ember close to his maximum speed, where other riders were unable (or unwilling) to attempt angering the horse at high speeds.

Chet started practicing with White Ember about three months ago, and has been riding him as a messenger for nearly a month. At first they were not noticed, but such a small boy on such a huge horse does gain attention. With such a light rider and a strong horse, Chet and White Ember can work all day long. No one should consider bullying or threatening the boy when that horse is around, because White Ember will kick down a stall door to come to the aid of Chet. Chet normally rides White Ember, but he will ride other

horses. At this point, pretty much only Chet rides White Ember.

#### **A New Day at the Races**

##### Publicly Known:

Earlier this week at the race track, there were some horses exercising before the late afternoon competitions. As this was effectively just practice, few people were out at the track. During a practice heat, one of the premier race horses in town had a new comer line up against it, just to give some competition. While the favorite won the race, he only won by a half a length. No other race horse has competed and lost by that slim a margin. There must be something special about this new horse, but other than the name, River Folly, no one knows anything about it.

##### Privately Known:

The owner of River Folly bred him specially from two famous lines of race horses. While not directly bred from competing race horses, these horses both had grandparents who were successful runners. The owner is furious that his secret weapon has been shown, but he is also thrilled that his breeding gamble has paid off.

The trainer knew that the owner considered this horse to be special, but he did not know the whole history. He felt the horse was fast but without stop watches and other technology, he really didn't know how fast. He also wanted to insure that the horse would not panic in a race, so he agreed to have the horse act as a "sparring partner" for the champion. Little did he know what the result would be.

The trainer is a mainstay at the race track and has been for decades, though he hasn't trained a champion in years. Most of the people who were there that day know him, know who he is, and know where to find him. But they do not know this new horse or its owner. Immediately upon seeing the two horses finish so close, the trainer grabbed the horse, the jockey, and all their gear and got out of there. He knew he was going to catch hell for this display and hoped to minimize the damage, but it was too late.

Both sides of the race, the established champion and the trainer, are downplaying the results. "Oh the champ took it easy on him." "The jockey didn't want to exhaust the horse that early in the day." All sorts of nonsense to imply that the champion really is faster than River Folly. This will work to River Folly's benefit. When his first race comes, there will be a huge amount of interest in watching him run and a huge amount of betting. Even after winning his first couple of races, there will be detractors willing to bet against him because they think it's a scam; the champion's jockey was in on it and they staged this for the attention it brought. Eventually, the two will race again, and the interest on that race will be enormous.



# THE GOOD LIFE

## Stages

The fastest, non-magical, land based travel in a fantasy world is going to be stages. What are stages? Well, this is where stage coaches get their names. One set of horses runs the first stage. They stop, change horses and run the next leg. On and on again. Another well-known example is the Pony Express. The rider jumps off one horse and onto another racing to the next post site, only to do it again.

Stages - whether messenger services or coaches - are fast, really fast compared to other forms of travel. But they are also expensive. The services has to maintain three or four times as many horses that a "normal" service would need, plus the various posts along the way, whether they are stations or simply farms. So setting one up is a difficult and expensive task, almost as difficult and expensive as maintaining one.

One of the newest staged messenger services is the Marasukha Chain. The long term intent of the Marasukha Chain is to run a staged messenger from Scaret to Brinston, from ocean to ocean. This is a pretty lofty goal, especially to be able to do it and still earn a profit.

The name of the line comes from their extensive use of Marasukha horses. The Marasukha is a common horse found near Scaret. Though they are not considered to be draft horses, they are solid animals, not as sleek as most riding horses. They are tall, strong and fast, but often considered to be difficult to control. They are black or dark brown and any individual with any white markings is considered to be a mutt and not a true Marasukha.

The Marasukha Chain has established service from Scaret to Villai and now to Forsbury. One of the ways they have managed to cut costs is to put their relay stations at horse ranches or well-established inns. While relay stations at ranches means that the rider may have to stop to deliver a mail pouch at a place where he is not getting a fresh horse, the time lost here is not considered to be significant. By placing these relay stations out of the way the costs are far less, and the station masters have other jobs to offset how much they need to make at the station.

The Marasukha Chain uses horses other than the Marasukhas, but not that many. They also often use quarterlings (half humans - half-halfings) to keep the weight of the riders down. As they supply the horses, working on the Chain can be a great way to earn money for riders of all kinds who might lose their horses and be unable to earn without them - people like rodeo riders, small operation messengers, etc.

## Slang & Superstitions

Throughout Fletnern, there are a very large number of people who are absolutely convinced that they know all about equines of all types. Unfortunately too many of these people are just flat out wrong. Here are some of the superstitions and legends that are believed about equines from around the World of Fletnern:

Many of the northern cultures on Drentae believe that unicorns are entirely mythical. They do not believe that they exist. Even when they see them in circuses or menageries, they will insist that it is a trick of some kind. They will still flock to see these creatures though many are hoping for the chance to prove the creature a fake. So in these cultures, unicorn owners need to take extra precautions, because of the number of people who will try to rip the horn off to prove the hoax.

The Turgor people of Southern Drentae have seen zebras, but are less familiar with horses. Therefore when they have heard unicorns described, they believe them to be zebras with horns. They have even been known to dress baby rhinos in zebra skins and march them in parades.

There are various peoples who believe unicorns can fly, though only some of these folks believe they have wings. With or without wings, they are convinced that a creature as magical as a unicorn must also be able to fly. This is a frequent subject of artworks, especially by elves and those cultures influenced by elves.

Many have heard and believe stories that the unicorns can detach their own horns and will do so in order to reward those who have helped them. This legend probably started when horn poachers would return home and people would be appalled at the idea that a creature as beautiful as the unicorn was slaughtered simply for their horn. Many believe this is how the wardens come to obtain unicorn horns, though these are more likely recovered from dead unicorns or from poacher sites. While the wardens respect and revere the unicorns, there is a point to not letting such a powerful magical item go to waste.

Along with the legends (at least partially true) of the poison negating effects of a unicorn's horn, many people believe that unicorn horns will negate acids (and bases). It is therefore common for one of these unenlightened folks to put acid on a unicorn horn and when the acid affects the horn, they believe this is proof that the horn is fake.

Many people throughout the world are convinced that horsehide is stronger than steer hide. The two substances are roughly of the same strength and the true strength of one or the other would be measured in its thickness and not which animal it came from. Some of

the contributing factors to this legend are that horses are rarely skinned when they are young, but typically only after they have grown old in the service of their owner. These older animals typically have thicker skins than the young steers that may be slaughtered before they are a year old.

Another contributing factor is that horsehide is nearly always used for its strength, while calf hide can be used for its beauty. Calf's hide can be thinned to be used for more delicate projects, which may be appropriate for the project, but will certainly weaken the leather. For example, parchment is never made from horse hide, but is made from the hides of young steers. Tanned horse hide is considerably stronger than the carefully thinned and stretched parchment.

A person cannot flap two pegasus feathers and fly, but many have tried. The belief is that the feathers are magical and if the wings can hold up the horse, then two (or another small number) feathers can hold up a person. Many people throughout history have died attempting to fly in this fashion.

Despite fans of pegasus wings being one of the more popular throne room decorations (still very rare, but coveted), many people are convinced that pegasus feathers do not resemble bird feathers, but instead either ostrich feathers or peacock feathers. This is clearly the fault of con artists selling these odd feathers and claiming they are pegasus feathers. These are also likely to be the folks encouraging children to leap off of roof tops clutching two ostrich feathers and thinking they are magical.



## IN CONCLUSION

A very sincere thank you to all of our Patreon patrons! We feel like we're hitting our stride on these monthly editions, but your constructive criticism is highly appreciated and seriously considered! Please continue to let us know what you think.

We're currently running Small Bites, the Fletnern wiki, the Sounding Board blog, and distributing product. What else? What would you want? We're hoping to hire someone who doesn't have a face for radio so we might be able to start thinking about videos. Let us know your interest level (or if you're really good looking and want to help). We've considered internet run games, but again - without you letting us know what you're looking for, we just don't know what will get you excited. Let us know!

If you have not yet chosen to become one of our patrons, we ask that you do one of two things: either patronize us because you love the content we're publishing, or tell us what you would want in order to patronize us. This really is a collaborative affair. We listen and we react to the constructive criticism that we get!

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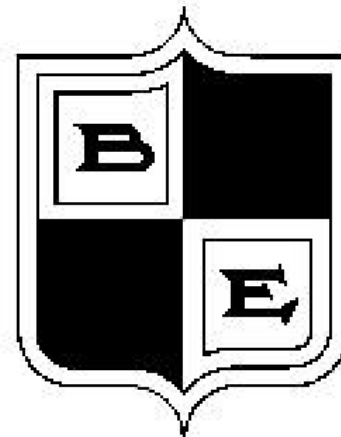
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The Secret Word is: alicorn





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Did you like the theme? Let us know! Did you like some of the articles? Let us know that too. Did you dislike an article? Yep, let us know that as well. Seriously, we want a two-way conversation. Constructive criticism? We can take it (the constructive kind, not trolling please).

So what are we asking of you? Well, if you want to support us, please pledge some money. Just interested in seeing where we're going with Fletnern and the wiki? Great, become a World Walker. It's only \$1 a month, and we'll give you new people, places and things around Fletnern. Interested in learning more about the world and getting all sorts of ideas for new characters for you to play and even ideas and strategies for characters you may already be playing? Become a Player Character, aka Player. It's \$5, and we will give you as much content as we can! Are you a game

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