

## Magic for Your Mount

“It’s off to adventure!!! Grab your arms, don your armor, load up the rope, torches, oil, flint and steel, place them in your backpack and off you go. The road to the hidden keep may be long, maybe we should get some horses to pack some of our stuff, and we will need them to pack out all the treasure we find” so says Ebreck, the fighter. Two days later.... The PC’s, “ They were such good mounts, to bad they weren’t strong enough to withstand the beating from that ogre.” DM “How are you going to move your stuff now? “

If the players had just made better preparations before hand they would not be in this situation. Often, characters and DM’s pay little or no attention to the details of their mounts and how important they are to an adventure. I have played many an adventure where mounts were not taken in account for and characters have been forced to walk for days on end in order to get somewhere, or leave behind that all valuable loot, just to return later and find someone has already claimed it, all because of carelessness. Mounts of all shapes and sizes can be found in almost any campaign, from griffons and giant birds to your run of the mill warhorse or pony. Each of them can be outfitted with protective barding and special saddles and harnesses that can be magically enhanced or specifically designed to add more protection to these all but very important companions.

If any character should be worried about protecting a mount it most definitely is the paladin. As everyone knows the greatest ally a paladin can have is his mount. On a basic level, a paladin’s mount has several special abilities with some minor attack prowess and natural armor status. If however, this mount is outfitted with some magically enchanted equipment, the paladin gains a mount that not only holds its own in battle, but also is a force to be reckoned with. Lets take a look at the average mount for a paladin, the heavy warhorse.

A heavy warhorse has fairly decent stats for a mount and being a paladin’s mount, in this example, enjoys the comfort of an increased bonus to AC for being so. Lets take a 5<sup>th</sup> level paladin’s mount and break out the statistics shall we. A heavy warhorse has an AC of 14 to begin with and gains a bonus of +4 for being the paladins chosen mount. An AC of 18 is no match against the onslaught of minions a 5<sup>th</sup> level paladin will be riding into and will probably not last very long, but the odds can be improved. By spending a little cash that the character should have acquired by 5<sup>th</sup> level (unless you have a stingy DM) a mount can be armored and made battle ready. By spending a minimal amount of gold (200gp), scale mail barding can be made for the mount offering the creature a +4 bonus to AC and only weighs 60lbs. This will in no way hinder the movement rate of the mount as 60lbs is considered a light load even for a light warhorse, and you have effectively given your mount an AC of 22. With a minimal Ride skill check (DC 10), a paladin can make attacks from the back of a mount and also allow the mount two hoof attacks. With the extra barding, and two extra attacks, this is a tag team duo that can wade into the midst of a swarm of evil and pound them into the dirt. As more treasure is found the paladin might find it useful to enchant the barding for his mount adding even more protection with minimal cost and no hindrance to the horse.

Of course if your not a paladin and want to fight from the back of horse, your going to have to work a little harder in order to attain a well armored mount for combat. In order to get an AC of 20 or higher with a heavy warhorse, a character would have to spend at least 800gp for splint mail barding. This is far more than the 5<sup>th</sup> level paladin would have to spend, and little less effective, but remember, anything helps, and if you

depend upon your horse for carrying food, water, and daily supplies, 800gp is worth your survival. In order to have a comfortable AC in which to wade into battle with most characters would want to give this barding a +2 enchantment giving the creature an AC of 22, but this will cost a character 2,000-4,000gp or more, depending on the circumstances. This is a considerable amount of money for a 5<sup>th</sup> level character when comparing to the paladins mount above. Most 5<sup>th</sup> level characters will want to spend their gold on themselves rather than their mount, so many characters won't be able to afford such luxuries until 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> level.

Its not only barding that increase the use of mount, but other enchanted items too. *Horseshoes of speed* for instance can be the one thing that saves your life or that of your packhorse. These horseshoes may not add any bonus to AC for your mount, but you can sure ride away from a battle quick if things get to hairy, and for a minimal cost of 1,900gp. You could also enchant horseshoes just like you could weapons. Get your horse some *horseshoes* +3, or maybe some *horseshoes of disruption*. Remember though that just because I'm talking about horseshoes, it doesn't mean you can't make similar items for other mounts. Say you have a giant eagle for a mount and want to increase its attack prowess and flying speed so you create *spurs* +2 for fitting over the talons, and a *bridle of speed*, or a *saddle of speed*. Just because a description is given for something doesn't mean it is set in stone, use your imagination to create whatever special gear you may need for your special mount. The cost for creating specialty items of any sort should be the same for enchanting anything else, but you will most certainly have to pay extra costs for simply getting someone to design and craft any type of exotic equipment or exotic gear you may want to enchant.

I hope this opens up a new view on mounts and their importance to campaigns. There is no limit to the role that a mount can play in a game, and there is no limit to amount of creative pieces of gear a character can create for their mount.