
What is it like to be a Dragonrider?

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As the caste which protects Pern from Threadfall, the Weyr is inherently a military organization. Moreover, it is an army in the middle of a war, one which they have certain knowledge WILL continue for another 40-some Turns. Much of the life of a dragonrider or support staff member of the Weyr is composed of the necessary labor required to keep the Weyr operating at a state of peak performance. The powers that be do their best to accommodate the needs of the over 1,000 people who live at Kadanzer, but discipline is strict, because it has to be.



Daily Activities

Time for inhabitants of the Weyr can be said to be split into three basic periods, each dominated by a single type of task. These periods of time are: a) sleeping & eating, b) work time, and c) free time. Depending on an individual's rank and responsibilities, an individual within a Weyr will have about six to twelve hours of labor a day, with their remaining hours split between sleep, mealtimes, and recreational pursuits. Individuals of rank within the Weyr will, due to their duties, have respectively less recreational time than other members of the Weyr.

Recreation for all members of the Weyr may include the following elements: the care and feeding of pets; attending Gathers or other festive occasions, pursuing hobbies and pastimes, socializing with wingmates, friends and family, or whatever else suits your character's needs or desires. Contact with holders and crafters outside the Weyr is usually rare. Given the political climate, dragonriders find that the company of holders and crafters, unless necessary, is not always comfortable.

The first and most basic duty of every dragonrider is the physical and mental well-being of his or her dragon. Dragons must be oiled and bathed every two to three days, though if it is every three, the oiling would have to be *very* thorough; every second day is best. This chore can take anywhere from one to four hours, depending on the size of the dragon. Dragons only feed once every week or so in normal conditions during an Interval, and once every four days during the stressful conditions during a Pass. Healthy adult dragonriders are expected to take their dragons hunting in the wildlands of Southern rather than feed them from the Weyr's Feeding Grounds. The second concern of every dragonrider must be the care and condition of his or her riding gear: not only must the riding straps remain strong

enough to keep a dragonrider (plus gear or passengers) astride during any combination of stressful maneuvers or trips between, but care must be taken to keep the riding gear supple and soft, so as to not chafe or pinch the dragon's hide. Like a horse's saddle, a dragon's riding gear should be custom-fitted in order to rest comfortably astride the dragon's neck and withers and to not restrain the movement of the wings. Straps must cinch securely without restricting the dragon's windpipe or gullet, to allow for respective freedom of breath and firestone digestion/flame control.

Once assigned to a Wing, dragonriders are expected to participate in all duties assigned by his or her wingsecond(s) or wingleader. These will include sweep rides and patrols of the Weyr's protective territory, wingdrills, and watch duty. These duties will absorb the majority of a dragonrider's workday. Additionally, Wings will be assigned to Search certain areas of the Weyr's territory when needed, and individual, diplomatically-inclined riders may be asked to run errands to other Weyrs, Holds, or Crafthalls as needed.

Most of a dragonrider's work time, as well as mealtimes and recreational time, is spent in the company of his or her Wing. This hones the individual's skill in working as the member of a team, and is a prime reason why the bonds between wingmates are an enduring, integral part of a dragonrider's life. The best of the Wings have a secondary familial relationship between the wingmates, and petty feuds between individual wingriders are quickly resolved by wingleaders and wingseconds. More serious quarrels are resolved by the Weyrleader.

As a Weyr must be ready for Threadfall (or other emergencies) at all times of the day or night, and in all conditions, periods of labor or flight training will rotate for entire Wings.



Drills

Most wingleaders have their Wings conduct drills frequently, as a way of honing and perfecting skills, and practicing tactics that require well-choreographed team maneuvers in an environment more safe than actual Threadfighting. Although there are many kinds of drills, one of the most useful is the simulation of actual Threadfall, in which simulated Thread is dropped from a height in a pattern which approximates the way Thread really falls. The simulated Thread is made of natural vines or rags dipped in a specially made dye which will mark wherhide clothing, human skin and dragon hide, but which will wash off easily. The simulated Thread drills are done in all kinds of weather, in all conditions, since Thread itself will not wait for sunny, windless days. During an Interval, simulated Threadfall is conducted as a competition, often held between different Weyrs, and is taken very seriously as it is the only means of preserving skills which will be vitally needed when Thread returns.

Weyrlings are introduced to the simulated Thread drills during their training, to teach the basics of fighting Thread.

During a Pass Weyrs rarely participate in inter-Weyr threadgames, but they DO use the games within the Weyr for practice purposes, to drill new formations, try new techniques, or drill new wing members. Most Wings will fly drills regularly, keeping their formations sharp.

One of the common tasks of children, those recovering from injuries, and elderlies is twisting the natural vines and coarse ropes into "Thread". Outworn garments are never thrown away; they become part of the game ropes. Lengths from three to 12 feet are made. The ropes are coated with a special dye specially designed for this purpose - it marks clothing, skin or hide of anything it touches, but can wash off easily. This shows how the rider or dragon would have been Threadscored had it been real Thread. Many Wings make it part of their daily tasks to make ropes for training sessions. The task is fairly easy, and often done to pass time, or to keep hands busy during conversation.



The Roles of Ranking Dragonriders

Wingseconds, in addition to the duties required of all mature dragonriders, act as lieutenants to the Wingleader, doing whatever tasks he assigns to them. These duties will include (but not be limited to) the ongoing evaluation of the Wing's riders and overall wingstrength, Wing discipline, overseeing wingriders in assignments, and the organization and management of wingriders in practice drills. Basically, the wingseconds are the arms, eyes, and ears of their wingleader. They are also ready to step in as Wingleader immediately if the Wingleader is injured or killed in fall. There are always two wingseconds in each wing, a senior and a junior. The senior wingsecond takes over first and if he is injured as well, then the junior wingsecond takes over. In the military organization of the Weyr, a wingsecond is comparable in rank and authority to a sergeant-in-arms; wingseconds are promoted and demoted by their wingleader, with the Weyrleader's approval.

A **wingleader** is a bronzerider who leads a Wing of riders, and he is selected by the Weyrleader. A wingleader's responsibilities includes overseeing the health of his wingriders and their dragons, the on-going evaluation of each wingpair's performance and of the performance of the overall Wing, the overall discipline of the Wing, the course of wingdrills and additional flight practices, and the reporting of all patrol and watch findings of his wingriders to the Weyrleader. He ensures that his wingriders are ready to go and fully stocked with firestone prior to 'Fall, reports readiness to flightleader, and coordinates positioning of wingriders, and tactics to be used for the day's Threadfall (coordinated with other two wingleaders under the final authority of the flightleader). He is responsible for individual discipline of wingriders, subject to the Weyrleader and Weyrwoman. He recruits graduated

weyrlings to his Wing in coordination with other wingleaders and the Weyrleader. The wingleader is held directly responsible for the performance of his Wing, and wingleaders are promoted and demoted by the Weyrleader. If requested, a wingleader will also act as a diplomatic liaison for the Weyr, if and when the Weyrleader, Weyrwoman, or a goldrider are unable to do so. A wingleader's rank within a Weyr is comparable to that of the modern captain of a combat troop.

A **flightleader** is selected by the Weyrleader with input from the Weyrwoman. A flightleader is a wingleader who, in addition to his wingleader duties, also oversees all three Wings in his particular Flight. In normal weather conditions, only one Flight meets each Threadfall. As of early 2857 (2002) the Weyrleader is no longer a wingleader or flightleader, and might or might not rise to meet every 'Fall. Before that change was made, the Weyrleader was always the flightleader of his own Flight and generally did not rise with the other Flights, so the other flightleaders led Threadfall for their own Flights. Now every Flight has its own leader who is in charge of tactics during the 'Fall unless the Weyrleader himself chooses to take command. The flightleader also coordinates and oversees flightdrills, and is responsible for reporting on the performance of his Wing and the Flight as a whole to the Weyrleader. There is no "Flightleader Second". In the event that the flightleader is injured or killed, one of the other two wingleaders becomes flightleader. A decision is made in advance as to which wingleader is senior to the other in terms of who takes over first.

The **Weyrsecond** acts as the Weyrleader's lieutenant, performing whatever tasks the Weyrleader assigns him to ease the workload of the Weyrleader. He may be the senior wingsecond of the Weyrleader's Wing, but this is not always true. He is appointed directly by the Weyrleader. The Weyrsecond has authority over all wingleaders and flightleaders, subject only to the Weyrleader and the Weyrwoman. In the event that the Weyrleader is injured or killed, the Weyrsecond becomes Weyrleader until the next mating flight of the senior queen dragon. (Because of this, it is preferable for the Weyrsecond to be a bronzerider.) If the Weyrsecond is injured or killed, the Weyrwoman would select one of the remaining flightleaders to take on the role of Acting Weyrleader until the senior queen's next mating flight. When the Weyrleader was also a wingleader, the Weyrsecond position was generally filled by his senior wingsecond. With the organizational change of early 2857, the new Weyrleader appointed a Weyrsecond of his own choosing, and it is expected that this pattern will continue.

The **Weyrleader** is the four-star general of the Weyr. He is the final authority for all matters relating to fighting Thread. A Weyrleader is chosen by physical contest among the bronzes of a Weyr in pursuit of the senior queen. The bronze who wins the Mating Flight has made his rider Weyrleader.

In addition to providing leadership during a Pass, Weyrleaders are expect to protect the Weyr from any

outside threat. As of early 2857, if a bronzerider was a wingleader or flightleader before winning the Weyrleadership, he is so no longer, as the responsibilities of his position leave him with not enough time to actively manage and train a fighting force. The Weyrleader's duties include the following:

- The health, welfare, and safety of all individuals and dragons living within the Weyr.
- Computation of Threadfall charts.
- Assignment of wingstrength (number of riders) among the Wings.
- Responsible for directing and training the groundcrews.
- Responsible for the overall performance of each Wing and Flight.
- Makes watch and patrol assignments.
- Responsible for the promotions and demotions of wingleaders, and ensuring they are competent.
- Protect the Weyr from outside threats.
- Oversee the transfer of dragonriders between Wings.
- Provide proper training to all new weyrlings. (Works with the Weyrleader and Weyrwoman.)

The **Weyrwoman** is the overall leader of the Weyr. She wields more authority than any other member of the Weyr. She is responsible for the health, welfare, and safety of all individuals and dragons living within the Weyr, as well as for the overall condition of the Weyr grounds, facilities, and properties.

The Weyrwoman's duties include the following:

- The health, welfare, and safety of all individuals and dragons living within the Weyr.
- Maintain the overall condition of the Weyr grounds, facilities, and properties.
- Maintain all historical records and documenting events and supply tallies into them.
- Oversee the arrival of tithes from the Holds and Crafhalls. (This includes negotiations for changes in tithed amounts, and sending out riders to collect them as needed.)
- Oversee the ongoing collection and proper storage of needed supplies, including food and livestock. (Works with the Headwoman and her staff)
- Provide education and proper training of all new weyrlings. (Works with the Weyrleader and Weyrharper in this.)
- Provide education and training to all children and staff living within the Weyr (works with the Weyrharper in this.)
- Provide enough Candidates prepared to stand at each Hatching. (Includes assignment of individuals or Wings for Search duty - works with the Weyrleader for assignment of available riders.)
- Personnel assignments. (Works with individual craft and support staff heads.)

- Oversee fostering of all children within the Weyr.
- Dispute arbitration between riders, staff, and dealings with the Holds and Halls. (This includes the punishment of offenders.)
- Ensuring dragonriders are not risking themselves or their dragons through timing or other dangerous activities.
- The hiring and firing of Weyr personnel. (Including the Headwoman and Weyrleader - though his/her dismissal is done with the Weyrleader's input.)
- Maintaining good relations with the Lord Holders of her territory, the other Weyrs, Crafhalls, and Holds to the North and South.
- Regulates contact between dragonriders and Hold or Craft personnel outside of the Weyr's territory. (Such as visits home, convalescent time, etc.)

The Weyrwoman and Weyrleader share certain tasks jointly. These include:

- Authorize incoming and/or outgoing transfers of dragonpairs to and from other Weyrs.
- Assignment of daily, weekly, and monthly duty rosters for the Wings.
- Assignment of riders for special duties. (Such as collecting dignitaries and other tasks that are political in nature.)
- Placement of weyrlings after graduation.
- Attend Conclaves. (Holder and Weyrleader Conclaves)
- Assignment of special chores or duties to individuals or Wings that are requested of the Weyr. (Disaster help, etc.)
- Punitive action done by the Weyr.

The **Weyrleader** is the drill sergeant of the Weyr: he is the one responsible for the training and education of all of the young dragonpairs who Impress at a Weyr. His direct superior is the Weyrwoman; only the Weyrwoman can promote a Weyrleader to his position, and she has the power to demote him as well. A Weyrleader needs anywhere from one to five assistants at any one time to ensure the discipline and education of the weyrlings; the Weyrleader chooses his assistants from those wingriders who show both interest and ability at training the weyrlings, and will often times bring in wingseconds, wingleaders, and the Weyrwoman, as well as craft representatives, to lecture the weyrlings on diverse subjects such as flight mechanics, diplomacy, groundcrew direction and organization, and Threadfall tactics.

Weyrlings are the freshmen dragonriders in every Weyr. In addition to their schooling, weyrlings are commonly assigned duties such as cleaning, hunting, harvesting, flying on errands to holds and halls, and other such scut work. If it is tedious work, assume that the weyrlings will be assigned to do it.

The **Headwoman** is the Weyrwoman's direct steward over the management and upkeep of the Weyr and its inhabitants. Her territory is the extensive Lower Caverns,

though now that the Weyr has moved out of its mountain, the term "Lower Caverns" no longer really applies. Her duties are many and varied, and including monitoring inventory of all supplies, varying the diet of the weyrfolk from season to season to ensure their overall health, ensuring that all furniture and weyrcots are repaired and maintained, that stocks of clothing, linen, and quality hide are available for riders and other Weyr inhabitants, the proper fostering of older children and the quality daycare of younger children. To aid her in her own work, the Headwoman will assign a direct assistant to run individual portions of the Weyr, such as the Kitchen, Infirmary, or as a Quartermaster.

Weyrcrafters: Each craft in the Weyr has a representative who reports directly to the Weyrwoman on the state of his crafters, his needs, and anything concerning his craft within the Weyr. The craftmaster of each craft at the Weyr is generally called the Weyr(name of craft): for example, the Weyrsmith, the Weyrharper, the Weyrherder.

The **support staff** are the unsung heroes of the Weyr. These are the men and women who do the laundry, sweep the floor, cook the meals, dust, mop, fix the plumbing, and ensure that the dragons and their riders are kept comfortable and healthy. Weyr support staff are treated with more respect than the common drudges of hold and hall, but they are still often overlooked or taken for granted by many dragonriders. (Never refer to a Weyr support staffer as a "drudge" if you want to see clean underwear again!)