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# Fostering on Pern

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Historically, fostering began and became common practice on Pern for two distinct reasons: widening the gene pool, and permitting mothers to do other work.

In ancient times, women were freely admitted to the crafts and were unable to take care of their children on a full-time basis. In a society in which it was considered very important for a child to have at least one regular constant care provider, fostering became a more attractive option than day-care. Women in the crafts, therefore, gave primary care of their children over to foster mothers in much the same way and for the same reasons that female dragonriders did and still do. (It was the advent of sweeping plagues which began to limit female participation in the crafts as the population was so ravaged that their function as childbearers came to be considered more important, and over time, women in the crafts became less and less acceptable.)

Since group living is common on Pern, and travel is limited, the problem of inbreeding arose. Similarly, residents of isolated cotholds did not have the opportunity to expand their knowledge, and a great deal of knowledge was lost. For these reasons, it became the practice to exchange youngsters with other holds both so that they could meet and later marry people who were not remotely related to them, and so that they could learn other aspects of crafts or hold knowledge which might otherwise get forgotten.

Due to the fact that the oldest son of the Lord Holder is not automatically the heir, as well as the fact that the Conclave of Lord Holders must confirm the appointment of a new Lord Holder, it became the custom, also, for Lord Holders to exchange their offspring, again so that they could meet and marry people they were not related to, and so that they could get training in hold management from several Lords, thus improving their own holding skills, and their likelihood of being approved by the Conclave if they should be chosen as the Lord Holder.

In the Weyr, fostering is primarily due to the fact that mothers who are also dragonriders do not have the capacity to provide maternal care to their offspring. They would be able to look after their children even less than the average 21st century working Mom who at least has every evening and weekends. Caring for the dragons, drills and fighting Thread do not allow for much time for other chores. The bond with one's dragon is so strong that this usually compensates the mother who must give up her child, though many riders choose to remain close to their children and spend what time with them they can.

At Kadanzer Weyr, with the influx of transferees since the Poisoning, inbreeding is not likely to be a problem any time soon, though the Weyrwoman keeps close Records of parentage so as to determine when it may not be appropriate to allow marriage or weymating. In the past, however, this

was not the case, and in those days, it was common for the Weyrwoman to arrange to transfer children to be fostered at other Weyrs in order to spread the gene pool.

Many women in the Lower Caverns act as foster mothers, as well as being mothers to their own offspring. The child of a Lower Caverns woman, however, is not likely to be fostered unless his natural mother is in some way incapable of providing appropriate maternal care.

Children in the Weyr usually share their mother's bedchamber until they are old enough to sleep in the dormitory-like caverns with the other children of their age-group. There are also nurseries where the infants will go for daytime naps while their mothers or foster-mothers are busy in the kitchens or wherever else they work. Nursery Aunties will supervise at that point. Some large families may have a suite of caves and live together as a family, but that is not so common.