
Living In a Material Weyr: What do Dragonriders do for Money?

by Whitney Ware

The economic system of Pern is one which is based largely on a system of barter (see "[Currency On Pern](#)"). So many fans may find themselves asking, "What does my dragonrider do for money? How does he or she survive from week to week without a paycheck?" It's a good question, and one which bears further discussion.

First of all -- remember that a dragonrider technically never needs money to survive. This is an important consideration. The Weyr is responsible for feeding, clothing, and caring for all of its inhabitants. In order to do so, the Weyr receives tithes from the Holds and Crafts that have settled in the territories which the Weyr protects. Lord Holders and Mastercraftsmen alike may well grumble about being forced to pay "protection fees", but given the choice of sending a percentage of all harvests and production to the Weyr or seeing everything consumed and destroyed by Thread, only an insane man would fail to tithe.

At mountain Weyrs (such as Kadanzer before its move in 2856), virtually all resources are collected through tithes from Holds and Craftholds. These tithes include everything that the Weyr cannot easily hunt or gather from unsettled areas on its own. The majority of tithed items from holds are raw goods; craftholds will send processed goods like fabrics, tools, and nails, but the support staff of a Weyr are still commonly responsible for turning these items into needed goods like shoes, clothing, furniture, flight gear, etc.

With an approximate population of about 2,500 or more to clothe, feed, and provide for, obviously resources tithed to the Weyr must be stretched as far as possible and are strictly conserved. The Headwoman and her staff keep strict inventories of what supplies are issued to whom, and for what use. Nothing can be allowed to go to waste. Food scraps are saved to be used as feed for livestock at the Feeding Grounds or to be composted; clothing that is too worn down for use is cut up as cleaning rags; damaged goods are kept for salvage and are recycled and reused.

The remaining percentage of Weyr resources consists of food and medicinals gathered by Weyr staff. Fresh wild fruit is commonly collected from all over the Kadanzer territories by Lower Caverns staff; likewise, a large part of the numbweed used by the Weyr is gathered and processed by the Weyr's support staff. Hunting wild game is also an important consideration here. Space and feed for livestock at the Feeding Grounds is very limited, and livestock at the Feeding Grounds are intended for consumption only by dragonets too young to hunt, egg-bound queens, ill or wounded dragons, and for dragons who need to blood a

kill prior to a mating flight (the animals killed by bleeding dragons are not wasted either; after the mating dragons have left the Feeding Grounds, Weyr support staff go in and collect the carcasses to be butchered and used). All healthy adult dragons who can must hunt for their meals. Likewise, meat for the Weyr kitchens is often supplied by dragonriders in order to conserve tithed beasts for the dragons, and otherwise off-duty dragonriders are often conscripted by the Headwoman to provide meat for the Weyr kitchens.

At flatland Weyrs, such as Landing, Eastern and now Kadanzer in its new home, farms and pastures are maintained to make the Weyr much more self-sufficient. There are still tithes; bulk grains, herdbeasts, metal, blackrock, and firestone being the most numerous. Kadanzer Weyr is planning to establish its own full-scale beasthold, which should make it almost completely self-sufficient in that area (though most dragons will still need to hunt for their food elsewhere at least part of the time.) Accounting and inventorying is still strict, since the total amount of resources available is still about the same as at a mountain Weyr, due to the smaller tithes. The same sorts of conservation and re-use strategies are still in force, and the support staff still gathers food and herbs in many different regions across the Weyr's territory.

A dragonrider who finds him or herself in need of a basic necessity only needs to notify the Headwoman or one of her staff. Each Weyr maintains a small stockpile of clothing and other personal needs such as soapsand and towels; however, strict records are kept on who is issued what. At its old home, Kadanzer had a large stockpile of personal goods left over from those who died in the Poisoning; however, virtually all of this was lost in the final eruption of the old mountain since it had a low priority on the moving schedule.

A note on the number of personal possessions owned by your average Pernese: since all items on Pern are handcrafted, the individuals who possess those items value them accordingly. The people of Pern do not consume as conspicuously, or throw things away as guiltlessly, as we are used to doing. So try and think of personal possessions in the terms of the man-hours they represent. As Chris Geary-Durrill states so well in her article "[A Few Words On Thrift, Textiles, And A Hand-Made Economy](#)", everything produced on Pern is hand made and labor intensive. The average holder or crafter on Pern probably only has three sets of clothes: his or her Gather best, a second-best set best that are still in good condition but has gotten worn, and a set of work clothes. In accordance to

their rank, your average dragonrider has their flight leathers and probably three sets of clothes, including a set of Gather finery. If you expect your character to have a wardrobe the size of yours here on Earth, think again. Such lavish consumption would earn any dragonrider a second, sour look from the Headwoman, and a reputation for greed from his or her wingmates.

The Weyr provides all basic necessities for a dragonrider or other staff members. If an item is not in the current stockpile, it will be put on a list for the appropriate weycrafter to make. The only items which the Weyr does not provide are luxury goods, such as jewelry, fancy clothing, and gift items. Dragonriders who want such things must get them on their own. And what happens when a dragonrider leaves the Weyr and visits a Gather?

Very little in the way of currency is tithed to the Weyr; what the Weyr does receive is hoarded by the Headwoman. A few marks will be made available for weyrings and Lower Caverns staff on Gather days, but mature dragonriders never receive marks. That means that a dragonrider of any rank higher than a weyring must either ask for an item to be given to him or her for free (think of it as tithing on the individual level), or they must have their own cash to pay for it.

Just as a Lord Holder tithes to the Weyr, low-ranking holders and crafters will tithe to the individual dragonrider upon request, and within reason. For example -- any dragonrider, from weyring on up to Weyrleader, will get all their food and drink at a gather without having to pay for it. A dragonrider who asks for a pretty trinket or a new shirt will get it -- but again, only within reason. A tailor might be happy to give away his work to the first dragonrider who walks along... but after the fourth or fifth dragonrider asks for a freebie, that's going to begin to be acutely painful for that poor tailor, and his kids may end up going hungry that night if too many dragonriders make too many demands. Just imagine how a small baker might start feeling faint at a minor hold gather when several Wings of dragonfolk come sailing over the Dancing Square!. And when it comes to the high-priced items... well, any dragonrider who expects to be handed a gold necklace is asking for too much, and had best know it -- the craftsman might hand the item over as requested, but rest assured the Weyr will get the bill.

And you can take it for granted that the Weyrwoman does not like to receive bills.

Obviously, the Weyr depends on the self-restraint of its riders. Greedy riders mean offended merchants, which in turn means a damaged reputation for the Weyr and political trouble with Holders and Crafters. It's not uncommon for a Lord Holder or Mastercraftsman to try and refuse a tithe or to send the Weyr less than it is due on the excuse that dragonriders consumed more than their share at the last Gather. Obviously, to avoid getting themselves in hot water, dragonriders need to have their own supply of marks in their belt pouch in order to purchase luxury goods.

So how does a rider get his or her hands on some marks? Adult dragonriders must earn any marks they need. A mature dragonrider can do this through the pursuit of a craft or hobby or through pledging the service of his or her dragon.

Having a dragon means that the dragonrider has very little time for the pursuit of hobbies or crafts. However, what spare time a rider does have may well be put to profit. It is not frowned upon for a dragonrider to produce items for sale -- although a rider can be sure that their Wingleader or Wingsecond will come down on top of them like a sack of firestone if they begin to neglect their dragonrider duties in favor of crafting for profits. The wise dragonrider will make sure that the Craftmaster of whatever skill in the Weyr also reviews any items that dragonrider wants to sell before those items are offered on the market. First, getting the craftmaster's seal of approval will mean a higher profit. Second, trying to sell a shoddily constructed craft item will not only get the dragonrider laughed at, but will probably attract the notice of the rider's Wingleader, who is, of course, interested in protecting the reputation of his Wing and Weyr.

Dragonriders may also interest themselves in the collection of natural resources (hides, hunted game, wild fruit, firelizard eggs, etc.) as items of trade. The smart dragonrider may well have a small trade collection on hand when they head off to a Gather -- they might spend a candlemark or so bartering away their goods for cash, and then spend the rest of their day enjoying the small purse of marks they have earned.

The last tried and true method for a dragonrider to get his or her hands on the goods (or gold!) is the service pledge. Those dragonriders who have no craft-related skills can pledge their services to a holder or crafter in exchange for products, services, or money.

For example, let's use an example from a story. Brownrider D'zan wants to get a wedding gift for his new bride. The jewelsmith tool box he has his eye on his worth, oh... 20 marks or so (or about the price of two runnerbeasts trained to saddle). It's a lot of money -- and he's not about to ask for the item for free. So instead, he barter with the jewelsmith. The crafter has a daughter who'll be married off in a matter of weeks. He'd love to see all of his family attend that -- and his family is posted in crafthalls all over the Continent! He'd also love to get his hands on some ice to keep the wedding feast from spoiling under the tropical Thornblaze sun! So D'zan and the jewelsmith discuss the matter, and settle on a price: the brownrider will ensure that all members of the jewelsmith's family are transported to the Gather; likewise, on the morning of the wedding, D'zan will provide several barrels of ice and snow from a virgin mountain glacier which only a dragonrider could reach, and a side of freshly hunted wild wherry as well. The deal is struck; D'zan signs a service pledge, and heads back to the Weyr with Farrah's gift in hand. How D'zan ensures that he lives up to the agreement could be a story of his own. He might well have favors to call in from his wingmates L'ward and Salla;

maybe they are enlisted to help ferry jewelers to the wedding while D'zan shovels some snow. Or maybe he and Yoseph fly all of the smiths themselves, in their Gather best of course, in order to make the appropriate impression on the craftsmen and their wives. But whatever happens, the service pledge is honored. The Weyrwoman will literally and figuratively have the backside of any rider who does not honor a pledge, as such things damage the honor of all dragonriders. Often, a wingrider's entire Wing will be expected to reimburse the holder of a pledge, at two or three times the worth of the original pledge. This helps encourage dragonriders to be diligent in the enforcement of the honor of their Wing and Weyr...