

Beast-Rider

“A pegasus! A pegasus! My kingdom for a pegasus!”

A knight in shining armor mounted on a noble steed is a stereotype of a rider. But a half-orc riding an incredibly tough dire boar, an elven archer mounted on an unusually pristine pegasus, or a halfling berserker riding a giant lizard are enough to change one's point of view.

The beast-rider is an expert at riding unusual and often untamed mounts. He uses his great and hidden magical powers to locate, capture (or befriend), and train riding beasts in order to instill fear in his unwary enemies. While some riders are scoundrels eager to terrorize innocent people, many are noble, heroic figures, using their befriended beasts to ride into battles with evil.

Although beast-riders are a diverse lot, many of them started their careers as rangers, fighters or barbarians. Some druids also find the ways of the rider attractive. Members of other classes are rather rare.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become a beast-rider, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Ride (any three, taken separately): 4 ranks in each

Handle Animal: 6 ranks

Animal Empathy: 6 ranks

Feats: Mounted Combat

Special: Must have already ridden a non-standard mount (that is, not a one described in the *Player's Handbook*) and must possess an exotic saddle.

THE BEAST-RIDER

Class	Base				
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Bestial empathy, bonus feat, empathic link, riding beast.
2 nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Beastly boost +1
3 rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Beast's hide +2, heal mount 1/day
4 th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Bonus feat
5 th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Heal mount 2/day, improved evasion
6 th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Beastly boost +2, beast's hide +4
7 th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Bonus feat
8 th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Beast's hide +6, heal mount 3/day
9 th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Beastly boost +3
10 th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Perfect unity

Class Skills

The beast-rider's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the beast-rider prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Beast-riders gain proficiency in all simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, and all shields.

Riding Beast: The beast-rider can call an unusual type of mount (traditionally called “beast”, although the creature type may be different), depending on his level and alignment. The exact list of mounts available is up to the DM, but they must follow the following guidelines:

- If it is a non-flying beast, its CR should not exceed the beast-rider’s level + 2
- If it is a flying beast, its CR should not exceed the beast-rider’s level + 1
- If it is a dragon, its CR should not exceed the beast-rider’s level.
- If it has an alignment different from Neutral, it should only be available to riders whose alignment is within one step of the beast’s.
- The beast should not be larger than Huge and able to carry the rider in a typical fashion.
- The mount should preferably be an animal, a beast, a dragon, a magical beast, an outsider or vermin. (Note that vermin mounts may gain an Intelligence score and lose the immunity to mind-influencing effects).

Should the mount die, the beast-rider must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or lose 300 experience points per level of the prestige class. A successful save halves the loss. This rule also applies if the rider dismisses his mount. Having lost the beast, the rider may call a new one after a year and a day, or try to raise it from the dead, in which case the beast does not lose a level or a Constitution point and has accumulated abilities for the rider’s (probably changed) level.

The beast is a friend and a loyal companion of the rider; mistreating or overexploiting it may cause it to rebel or desert.

Bestial Empathy: The beast-rider receives a +4 bonus on Animal Empathy or Diplomacy checks involving creatures of his mount’s type. For example, if your mount is a dire bear, you get a +4 bonus on Animal Empathy checks involving bears. If your mount is a unicorn, you get a +4 bonus to Diplomacy checks while dealing with unicorns.

Empathic Link: The beast-rider has an empathic link with the mount, just like a sorcerer with his familiar (see the *Player’s Handbook*, page 51).

Bonus Feat: At the 1st, 4th and 7th levels the beast-rider can gain bonus feats from the following list (provided he meets the prerequisites):

Mounted Archery, Ride-By Attack, Skill Focus (Animal Empathy), Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Skill Focus (Ride)*, Spirited Charge, Trample.

* - may be taken several times, with different Ride skills.

Beastly Boost: The rider’s beast starts to increase in might and cunning. At the 2nd level, the mount gains an extra Hit Die (appropriate for the mount’s type), and a +1 inherent bonus both to Strength and Intelligence. At the 6th and 9th levels, the beast also gains extra Hit Dice and its bonuses improve to +2 and +3, subsequently. Remember that Hit Dice may improve the base attack bonus and saving throws, Strength may increase carrying capacity, and Intelligence may give the beast some skill points.

Beast’s Hide: The mount becomes incredibly tough and difficult to injure, gaining a +2 natural armor bonus to AC. The bonus rises to +4 at the 6th level and to +6 at the 8th.

Heal Mount (Sp): The beast-rider can use his inner powers to heal his mount. This spell-like ability works as a *cure moderate wounds spell*, but affects only the riding beast. The caster level is equal to half the beast-rider’s character level. Using *heal mount* is a standard action.

Improved Evasion: The mount is adept at avoiding damage. It gains the Improved Evasion ability as the rogue does (see the *Player’s Handbook*, page 48).

Perfect Union: At the 10th level, the rider and his beast gain a perfect understanding of each other’s abilities. The rider may use the mount’s saving throws and spell/energy resistance, and vice versa.