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Ride Herd

A Free *Star Wars* Mini-Adventure For The New Jedi Order Era

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"Ride Herd" is a *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* mini-adventure for four heroes of 6th or 7th level. The adventure is set during The New Jedi Order era, but it can be modified to work in any time period. It will be helpful (but not necessary) for some of the heroes to have the skills Ride and Handle Animal.

The scenario can be modified for heroes of higher level by adding more predators in Scene 2 and by increasing the outlaw's level in Scene 4. Since even high-level heroes probably haven't bothered to take ranks in the skills that most apply in this adventure, don't feel the need to raise skill checks too much.

Background

Froswythe, a planet in the Colonies, is a major source of meat and animal-based textiles for many planets in colony space and for the Core Worlds. Huge herds of banthas, nerfs, and lesser known herd animals roam the planet's rolling grasslands. The world is hardly a frontier in the galaxy, but since it's used primarily to raise livestock, it's sparsely populated by sentient beings.



Froswythe has a few tourist facilities for people who want to experience the ranching life. It's also rumored to be a bandit hideaway for Core World criminals, who can live in profound isolation out on the prairie in buildings of formed dirt that are virtually indistinguishable from the gentle hills that make up most of the planet's topography. One of these criminals, Fegred Ewd, crosses the heroes' paths in this adventure.

Getting the Characters Involved

Fringer heroes might have a blood tie to a rancher on Froswythe or might already know Jerren Durs, the rancher in "Ride Herd." Bounty hunter types might have tracked the wanted criminal, Fegred Ewd, to the planet, but picking up his life signs is too difficult amid the millions of herd animals and occasional predator. They'll have to land and look for him in person. Or, more simply, the heroes just might want to take a vacation and herd banthas and camp for fun.

Any of these excuses brings the heroes into contact with Jerren Durs, the leisure ranch boss who takes them out onto the plains of Froswythe. The adventure begins after the heroes meet Jerren and make arrangements to ride on a bantha herding excursion.

Scene 1: Saddle Up

The heroes start early, just before sunrise. Jerren wakes them up by banging a spanner on a bucket. Amenities at the Durs Ranch are not terribly primitive, but Jerren likes to play it up for visitors.

"Hey, wake up, planet hoppers!" Jerren yells. "I brought you some breakfast!" He plunks down a bowl of insects drowning in muddy water. "I saved you the juicy ones. Eat up while I saddle the ycaqt."

Once you stagger into the near-light of the morning, you can smell bantha steak cooking on a burner. Jerren is whistling near the ycaqt pen, and you can see that he made enough for everyone, with utensils and metal plates.

"Good, you're here. Okay, here's the plan for the next couple days. We're gonna ride out into the prairie and bring in the herd. There's about 700 banthas out there, been grazing since last week. We're gonna round 'em up and bring 'em in, probably be back sometime tomorrow night. I got your equipment loaded onto the ycaqt. While you eat, you can ask any questions. When you're done, we'll move out."

If they ask, Jerren tells the heroes:

- They won't need weapons, but they can bring 'em if they like.
- If the banthas hear anything overhead, like a ship or a repulsorlift vehicle, they'll scatter, and it will be hours before they all regroup, if they ever do. That's why everyone has to ride instead.
- The heroes will camp out on the plains for just one night.
- Each ycaqt is loaded with overnight gear suitable for whatever species are represented in the group. In most cases, this consists of a field kit with overnight gear in place of atmosphere-processing equipment. (Ycaqt are versatile enough to handle most body types, but if a hero has an extremely alien physiology, Jerren has prepared a flat hover sled pulled by a ycaqt with reins.)

Ycaqt

Ycaqt are reptilian creatures that run on two muscular legs with long, clawed toes. They have no forelimbs but do sport a long tail. Their heads and mouths are quite large compared to their bodies, like a whale's, and they run hunched forward. Ycaqt are stubborn but fast mounts, and they've proved to be adaptable to herding. They don't bite. Heroes without the Ride skill can ride ycaqt easily enough, but if they're attacked or want to do anything tricky, they need to make untrained Ride checks.

Ycaqt: Herd animal 1; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 10 (+1 Dex, -1 size); Spd 18 m; VP/WP 8/18; Atk +3 melee (1d6+4, tail slap) or +0 ranged; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +0; SZ L; Face/Reach 2 m by 4 m/2 m; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 4. Challenge Code A.

Skills: Jump +10, Spot +2, Survival +2.

Feats: Run (bonus feat).

Jerren Durs: Male Human Fringer 2; Init +0; Defense 14 (+4 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 15/12; Atk +3 melee (1d4, knife) or +1 ranged (3d8, blaster rifle); SQ Barter; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; FP 0; DSP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10. Challenge Code A.

Equipment: Comlink, electrobinoculars, field kit, medpac.

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +7, Jump +6, Profession (rancher) +9, Ride +7, Search +5, Spot +5, Survival +5, Swim +6.

Feats: Animal Affinity, Skill Emphasis (Profession), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster rifles, primitive, simple)

Scene 2: When Panthers Attack

About mid-afternoon, Jerren and the heroes come upon the herd. The banthas are spread out over several square kilometers, so the heroes need to round them up and bring them together.

Jerren wants to split up, ride around the herd, and meet on the other side. If any hero claims any competence at the Handle Animal skill, Jerren puts that person in charge of riding around the other side of the herd. The hero with the Handle Animal skill can make a DC 10 check. If successful, the banthas edge away from him or her, moving closer toward the herd.

If no one has Handle Animal, Jerren picks the person with the highest Charisma score and sends him or her around with half the group. They won't actually be able to do anything, but it's part of the faux ranching experience. Jerren takes the other half of the group, and he's careful to keep clearly inexperienced or inept people with him.

When the heroes are half a kilometer apart, a plains panther leaps out of hiding in the tall grass and attacks Jerren's ycaqt, and then Jerren himself. In the ensuing combat, heroes who wish to fight the panther from their mounts must make successful Ride checks. Otherwise, they must dismount.

Heroes may make a Spot check opposed by the panther's Hide check to avoid being surprised on the first round.

Plains Panther: Predator 4; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Defense 22 (+10 natural, +2 Dex); Spd 16 m; VPWP 26/14; Atk +9 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws), +7 melee (1d8+5, bite) or +6 ranged; SQ Pounce, rake attack, scent, +8 species bonus on Move Silently and Hide checks, +4 species bonus to Climb, Jump, and Listen checks; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; SZ M; Face/Reach 2 m by 2 m/2 m; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 16. Challenge Code C.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +14, Jump +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +14, Spot +2.

Feats: Multiattack, Track (bonus feat).

Special Qualities: Pounce -- When first attacking an opponent, the plains panther may make a full attack, even if it has already moved.

Special Qualities: Rake -- Plains panthers often attempt to grapple foes with their front leg claws. If they succeed in a grapple, they may use their hind legs to rake (+8 melee, 2d6 points of damage). A plains panther may rake when pouncing.

Scene 3: Stampede!

All the excitement from the panther attack spooks the banthas. At this point, the heroes have a few choices. A character with the Handle Animal skill can attempt a skill check (DC 15) to calm the banthas and prevent them from stampeding. A Force-using hero can try to settle them down with the Friendship Force skill (DC 20). If the hero fails, or if no one has these skills, the banthas stampede away from the direction of the predator's attack -- and toward the group of heroes who went around the other side.

Ycaqt are much faster than frightened banthas. A hero on the outside of the herd has little problem getting out of the way. However, a hero who tried to cut through the herd to reach the scene of the panther attack and got stuck when the stampede began is in serious trouble.

A trapped hero's ycaqt almost certainly suffers the effects of a trample attack on the first round. The hero may attempt a fast dismount or a soft fall with appropriate Ride checks, a Jump check (DC 20) to get on a bantha's back, or a Climb check (DC 10) to climb up the side of a bantha using its shaggy hair. Once on top of a bantha, a hero may either try to ride it (DC 10 Ride check because it's unfamiliar and has no saddle) or balance on top of it (DC 15 Balance check).

A hero on the ground can try to dodge around the banthas while moving slowly to the edge of the herd. This is not as preposterous as it sounds, but it takes some work on the hero's part. Assume that only one bantha each round gets to make a trample attack on a single hero.

Maddened Bantha: Herd animal 3; Init +3 (maddened); Defense 18 (+10 natural, -2 size); Spd 6 m; VPWP 58/50; Atk +11 melee (2d6+12, gore) or +3 ranged; SQ trample; SV Fort +12, Ref +1, Will +5; SZ H; Face/Reach 4 m by 6 m/2 m; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 3. Challenge Code D. *Skills:* Listen +2, Survival +2. *Feats:* Great Fortitude, Power Attack. *Special Qualities:* Trample -- As a full-round action, a bantha can run over a single opponent at least one size smaller than itself, dealing 4d6+12 points of damage, or half if a Reflex save (DC 21) is successful.



Scene 4: Git Off Ma Proppity!

Whether the heroes managed to soothe the herd or just waited it out until the creatures got tired, the banthas now stand around calmly, chewing the high grass. However, one bantha has wandered away from the herd and is munching on grass over a low rise.

The heroes have several options at this point. If Jerren is wounded or dead, they might want to use their comlinks to call for help. It's getting dark, but a rescue ship can pinpoint their location and arrive before sundown. This will scatter the herd again, but that's an acceptable loss.

If Jerren is alive and in relatively good health, he'll want to round up the one stray bantha and then settle in for the night. He rides with the heroes up over the rise to nudge the bantha back toward the herd.

When they get to the lone bantha, they discover that the low rise is actually a house made partially of formed dirt that blends into the landscape. The bantha is in the "front yard" of the house, and a grizzled Human stands in the doorway, pointing a blaster pistol at the heroes. He says:

"I don't care who you are or why you're here. If this is your animal, get it and get away from my house."

This hermit is actually Fegred Ewd, a criminal wanted on several Core Worlds (including Corellia). But bounty hunters looking for Fegred might have difficulty recognizing him. He's grown a long, scruffy beard and wears a hat pulled down over his eyes.

Fegred is hiding out in this dirt house until the heat cools down. Unless the heroes make it obvious that they're gunning for him, he doesn't really think they've come to arrest him. So, he just covers them with his blaster and tells them to get their bantha and get off his property.

How this plays out is entirely up to the heroes. Fegred wants to be left alone, and he won't start shooting unless somebody shoots at him or unless the heroes make it clear that they know who he is. He doesn't offer any kind of help, even if he heroes show him Jerren's wounded or dead body. He just insists that they leave immediately.

If a fight does break out, Fegred takes 50% cover in the doorway to his house. The dwelling has two windows in addition to the door, all facing east. It also has a garage where Fegred parks his landspeeder.

For Fegred's statistics, use the mid-level outlaw stats on page 350 of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* core rulebook.

Wrapping Up

If the heroes take their stray bantha and leave calmly, they can bed down for the night and ride back in the morning without further incident.

If they get into a fight with Fegred, he defends himself until he sees he's outnumbered. Then he retreats into the house, makes his way to the garage, and tries to get away in his landspeeder. The heroes have no hope of following on their ycaqt, and he quickly gets away.

If Jerren died, the heroes might want to stay for his funeral. His wife scatters his ashes out on the prairie, and his neighbors come and say nice things about him. The heroes are asked to say a few words if they wish, especially if one of them is a Jedi.

If anyone goes back to check on Fegred after the hoopla, he's gone, the house empty. This location has been compromised, so he's moved on to another hiding place on another planet.

Before you run "Ride Herd," check out some tips on speeding up the pace of your Star Wars games in our latest installment of ["Tips and Tactics!"](#)