

GROUND-TO-MOUNTED COMBAT PROGRAM

Version 2c – Jan 2021

A) Purpose

1. The SCA is devoted to the study of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Armored knights fighting from horseback against foot soldiers is an aspect of medieval battles and training manuals that intrigues many scholars. The experimental Ground-to-Mounted Combat program extends the existing equestrian mounted combat activities, in combination with armored combat ground fighting activities, to give both the ground fighters and the mounted fighters an opportunity to recreate field battles as they might have been in period times.
2. To mitigate risk during the experimental phase, the standards to participate are higher than required for regular mounted combat or armored combat:
 - a. Upper level horsemanship skills are required for riders.
 - b. Upper levels of equestrian training and desensitizing are required for equines.
 - c. Specialized training for Ground Combatants is required.
 - d. Martial skills for handling weapons while fighting from horseback and against mounted combatants is required.
 - e. Ability of both rider and Ground Combatant to recognize equine body language to avoid over stressing the mount is required.
3. Potential concerns and mitigation plans:
 - a. Mounted Combat approved padded weapons will be used during combat, due to the concern that the equine may be accidentally hit. Although we will not be using full strength blows during this activity, participants must always make their best effort to not strike the equine.
 - b. Horses must be adequately desensitized to this activity and must not show any aggression towards the ground combatants (ie. biting, striking, kicking). Any horses that show these behaviors cannot be used for this activity.
 - c. Each participant must be acutely aware of the equine's body language to ensure the equine is not becoming stressed to the point of losing control or possibly bolting.
 - d. Rider and ground combatants must be aware of the horse's position to fighters and any other equines present, to assure that no one on the ground gets stepped on or pinned between equines.
 - e. Riders must be in control of their horses at all times, and know when to take themselves off the field should their mount begin to have issues with the activity.

B) Society Level Administration

1. The experimental Ground-to-Mounted Combat program is administered at the society level. As such, the SEO has a specific deputy in charge of the program, the Ground-to-Mounted Combat Deputy. The Ground-to-Mounted Combat Deputy may have deputies to assist in the program.
 - Society Deputy for Ground-to-Mounted Combat: Mistress Doe ni Flynn (AnTir)
 - Ground Fighter/Armored Combat focus: Sir Alasdair MacDubhghaill (Outlands)

2. Kingdoms may choose to participate, and requires the approval of both the KEO and the KEM. The KEO must notify both the SEO and the Ground-to-Mounted Combat Deputy of the kingdom's intention to participate.
3. KEOs of kingdoms that are participating must send a report to the Ground-to-Mounted Combat Deputy each quarter, and include it in the SEO quarterly report.
4. The list of approved participants in the program shall be maintained by the Ground-to-Mounted Combat deputy, who shall inform the SEO of additions and removals each quarterly report.

C) Proposed Equipment

1. For the purpose of Desensitization Classes
 - a. Rider/Ground Combatants: No armor is required for desensitization classes. Use of non-metal weapons with no sharp edges (ie: approved heavy combat and Mounted combat weapons) will be allowed, as there will be no full contact blows, only tagging and light touch are permitted. Shields approved by heavy combat and mounted combat rules may also be used.
 - b. Equines: Eye protection is recommended.

2. For the purpose of Ground-to-Mounted Combat fighting
 - a. Rider: Armor must meet normal mounted combat standards as defined in the Society Equestrian Handbook. Elbows must be covered at a minimum with padding (ie. elbow pads, padded gambeson). Hand protection is strongly suggested.
 - b. Ground Combatants: Armor must meet the mounted combat standards or better. Approved armored combat armor is allowed. Elbows must be covered at a minimum with padding (ie. elbow pads, padded gambeson). Hand protection is strongly suggested.
 - a. Equines: Eye protection that meets the standards for Mounted Combat as defined in the Society Equestrian Handbook is required. The use of a chamfron or face protector and poll protection is highly recommended and may be a requirement in the final version of these rules, pending experimentation. As always, it is expected that riders take full responsibility for the safety and well-being of both themselves and their mounts.

3. Weapon Guidelines:
 - a. Swords: Mounted Combat standards as defined in the Society Equestrian Handbook
 - b. Spears, glaives, halberds, axes may be used
 - (1) Base material shall be schedule 40 ½-inch PEX (cross-linked HDPE (high density polyethylene)) pipe, ¾-inch PEX pipe, or 1” rattan for weapons under 7.5 feet in length. When using PEX pipe as the core, both ends must be capped. For spears greater than 7.5 feet, 1.25 inch shaved rattan may be used.
 - (2) Minimum ½-inch closed cell foam padding over all striking surfaces.
 - (3) Minimum diameter of 1.25 inches.
 - (4) Thrusting tips

1. Weapons with length greater than 7.5 feet - tips shall be no less than 2 inches in diameter/cross-section and have 2 inches of resilient material in front of the rigid tip of the weapon, thereby providing progressively resistant give.
2. Weapons with length less than or equal to 7.5 feet - tips shall be at least the same diameter as the shaft of the weapon they are mounted on and have 1.5 inches of resilient material in front of the rigid tip of the weapon, thereby providing progressively resistant give.
3. Other thrusting tips are at the discretion of the program Testing Marshal or Deputy in charge of the activity at that event or practice.

D) Proposed Conventions

1. Target Areas
 - a. Rider: Everything above the waist (standard mounted combat conventions)
 - b. Ground Combatant: Everything above the waist.
2. Acknowledgement of Blows
 - a. An effective blow is delivered with an effective technique for the particular type of weapon used, properly orientated, and with intentional positive pressure. This is similar to levels of force used in SCA Rapier combat, and not an armored combat level of force.

E) Participation

1. A marshal designated for this activity must be present for this activity to take place. The marshal must be authorized to marshal equestrian mounted combat, and approved by the Ground-to-Mounted Combat deputy and KEO.
2. All participants (riders and ground combatants) must be approved by the Ground-to-Mounted Combat deputy and KEO. Determining additional requirements and an authorization process is a goal of this experimental program. Initial process for approval includes:
 - a) Rider: Must be mounted combat authorized. Upper level horsemanship skills are required for rider. Example tests include:
 - Demonstrates control of horse and weapon at the canter (or fastest gait, gaited horses).
 - Demonstrates ability to control weapon, strike direction and force of shots against fighter on the ground.
 - Demonstrates ability to maneuver horse around ground fighters. Includes advance and retreat upon marshals command, and circling a fighter within weapon range.
 - b) Ground Combatants: Must show ability to safely use a weapon, safely maneuver on the ground around horses, and be able to judge an equine's body language. Example tests include:
 - Ability to strike a mounted rider, while avoiding the horse's head/neck/body.

- Ability to control the weapon when parried by the mounted rider (ie. Can keep weapon from striking horses head/neck).
 - Demonstrates ability to maneuver on the ground around horses. Example test: A rider advances such that the ground combatant must move and/or use their hand/arm to maintain a safe space.
- c) Horse: Upper levels of equestrian training and desensitizing are required for equines. The horse should remain in control during anticipated combat movement, sounds and incidental contact. Example tests include:
- Ground Combatant in armor walking around the horse, striking a shield with sword.
 - Ground Combatant lightly striking the horse on the side, neck, and haunches.
 - Ground Combatant lightly bumping (shoulder, body contact) the horses side.
3. Marshals:
- a. Society Deputy for Ground-to-Mounted Combat: Approves Participants and Marshals.
 - b. Approving Marshal: Oversees program activities such as inspecting armor and weapons, marshaling the activity at events and practices. Recommends people for approval into the program. Teaches classes that include non-approved participants.
 - c. Participation Marshal: May oversee program activities that include approved program participants only. Includes inspecting armor and weapons, marshaling at events and practices. They may not teach or include non-approved participants in program activities.
4. A list of approved participants and marshals in the program shall be maintained by the Ground-to-Mounted Combat Deputy, who shall inform the SEO of additions and removals.
5. Kingdoms have the discretion to allow the activity in their kingdom. Experimental sessions will not be permitted at events in kingdoms that are not participating in the experimental program. (However, desensitization classes are not specific to this experimental program, and can be held in any kingdom, event, or practice.)

F) Goals

Within three to four years, establish rules, training, and authorization processes to be able to add Ground to Mounted Combat as an equestrian activity in all kingdoms interested. The first two years will be focused on collecting and evaluating data to inform the above. Annual reviews to the Society Earl Marshal will include data and analysis, updates to the experimental program rules, and goals for the following year.

Overall Goals of the Program include:

1. To safely and effectively teach Ground-to-Mounted Combat skills to interested participants.
2. To develop armor and authorization processes for both rider and ground combatants.
3. To safely demonstrate the usefulness and versatility of these skills in combat situations.

4. To be able to safely incorporate Ground-to-Mounted Combat into scenarios and event activities.

Proposed annual goals are data based goals. If an activity does not have enough data collected to move to the step, it may be included in the following year's goals.

Year 1 Goals:

- a. Establish the training and skills needed to participate, for riders and horses. This will be used to draft the authorization process in year 2.
- b. Establish the training and skills needed to participate, for ground combatants. This will be used to draft the authorization process in year 2.
- c. Determine the suitability of the proposed weapons. In particular: the suitability of using 1.25inch shaved rattan for spears greater than 7.5 feet; the suitability of shaved and non-shaved rattan for weapons under 7.5 feet.
- d. Determine the suitability of the proposed Conventions.

Year 2 Goals:

- a. Draft of the proposed authorization process and required skills for riders and horses.
- b. Draft of the proposed authorization process and required skills for ground combatants.
- c. Establish the training and skills needed for marshals. This will be used to draft the authorization process in year 3.
- d. Establish the acceptable conventions and scenarios/activities.
- e. Update and draft the acceptable equipment rules, and develop weapon/equipment check procedures.

Year 3-4 Goals:

- a. Collect and analyze data from the Year 2 proposed rules and processes.
- b. Draft final set of rules for Ground-to-Mounted combat for SCA wide implementation.