

Cheval de Frise

(*Brock*)

A *cheval de frise* was a medieval defensive anti-cavalry measure consisting of a portable frame (often just a log) with many projecting long spikes or spears. These simple anti-cavalry measures remained in use right up to the 19th Century. The device is designed to break up a cavalry charge and to provide cover for troops behind. In game terms, these things can force characters to stop and try to work their way round, potentially taking several extra rounds of missile fire, before closing with their enemy.

It is generally not possible to jump over a cheval de frise. They are made specifically to stop horses and their size would almost certainly impale a horse if it tried. Most horses, seeing the row of sharpened stakes, would simply balk at such an attempt (possibly throwing the rider).

The cheval de frise is effectively a trap. Horses can go from a gallop to a dead stop in no time at all, so it would be a check on Reflexes to see if the character doesn't get thrown onto the cheval de frise. Difficulty factor to avoid being thrown is 14 from a galloping horse, 12 from a horse going at a canter. (If using the skills from the Players' Guide, reduce these difficulty factors by 2 if the character has Advanced Cavalry skill.)

If a character gets thrown into the cheval de frise, he takes 0-3 (roll 1d4 -1) spear attacks ('0' because it's possible to be lucky and fall just short of the stakes). As the cheval de frise has only sharpened stakes (rather than metal spearheads), the impalements are (2d3, 4) each (similar to the wooden spears of the Ushok in Sleeping Gods p80).

If the character's steed is galloping/charging at the time he encounters the cheval de frise, add +1 to both Armour Bypass and Health Point damage due to the added momentum of the throw, i.e., 0-3 impalements at (2d3 +1, 5). A character who is thrown and misses the stakes would still take 1d6 Health Points damage (-2 if wearing armour) from falling from a fast-moving horse.

If the horse didn't see the cheval de frise (or was somehow urged onto it), it would need to make a Reflexes check to avoid it or suffer 1-3 impalements (2d3 +1, 5).

NOTE: for Dragon Warriors, the cheval de frise is an obstacle designed to delay PCs (while being shot at by defenders, if any are present), or to force them to find a way around. They are big things and generally easy to see (although placing them behind a corner could lead to a nasty surprise). The tight row of sharpened stakes should be a deterrent to trying to simply push through and the rules are there as a last resort for those that insist on trying.

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Last update: **2023/11/27 23:02**

