

FACTION BRIEFING: EQUESTRIANS

Historic Context

The *equites* (“horse” or “cavalrymen”, sometimes referred to as “knights” in English) constituted the second order of the property-based classes of ancient Rome, ranking below the Senatorial class. This wealthy class was required to furnish cavalrymen in the wars of the Roman Republic. During the Punic Wars, the equites transformed from cavalrymen into the senior officer class of the Roman military.

During the early Roman Empire, equites filled senior administrative and military posts in the imperial government. There was a clear division between the most senior jobs reserved for senators, and those reserved for the equites.

The career structure for both groups was similar: a period of junior administrative posts in Rome or Italy, followed by a decade of military service as an army officer, followed by senior administrative or military posts in the provinces.

The senators and equestrians were an elite of 10,000 members who monopolised power in an empire of 60 million inhabitants. Within the equestrian order, hierarchy was reflected in pay grades. Unlike the Senators, equestrians could involve themselves directly in commercial activities.

In the 3rd century, power shifted from the aristocracy to a class of equites who had earned their membership by distinguished military service. The senior centurion in a legion, the *primus pilus*, gained equestrian status after retiring, which created around 30 new members of the equites every year. Career military officers from the provinces, especially the Danubian legions, displaced the aristocracy from the top military commands, and then the top civilian administrative positions as well.



A reenactor dressed as a Roman Centurion.
CC SA 3.0 Luc Viatour / <https://Lucnix.be>

Player Goals

While individual characters may harbour secret ambitions, all Equestrians share the following goals:

- Acquire as much wealth as possible;
- Gain recognition and promotion from the Emperor;
- Rome must not be sacked!

Faction Goals

The Equestrian class is not a cohesive faction, as its members will move around between regions as commanded by the Emperor, and it does not get a set of policy options or resource points to spend. You may be able to influence the decisions of your regional commanders, and if promoted to the imperial household, you may have access to the Emperor and the ability to influence their decisions. The collective interests of the social class are:

- Defend the frontiers of the Roman Empire;
- Preserve the power of the Roman Army;
- Support effective military leadership by the Emperor, and replace weak Emperors.

Equestrian Roles

At the start of the game, the main Equestrian roles are as members of the Imperial Household, or as a military commander on the frontiers of the Roman Empire.

During the game, Equestrians may get promoted to regional command (Dux) roles, or into the imperial household. Wealthy Equestrians who acquire *latifunda* estates may get appointed by the Emperor to the Senate.

Equestrian Characters

Equestrians start with a **d6** Military die, and a **d4** Political die. You will have an initial salary of 1-3 Wealth Points per game round, which can be increased by the Emperor during play.

Treasury Control will auction a few *latifunda* each game round to the highest bidder.

Equestrians are allowed to invest in trade. To get funds for trade investments, you can loan money from other players, act as a middleman for a rich Senator, or borrow from the bank that Treasury Control manages.

Resources

At the start of the game you will command 1-3 legions, plus some auxillaries.