



**PONY CLUB**  
AUSTRALIA

Why Not Try...?



The Discipline of the Month

# Horse Archery

Five reasons to try horse archery

**1.**

1. It is something new, different and exciting.

**2.**

2. You learn how to safely ride without reins and use a bow and arrow.

**3.**

3. Horse archery is a revived and rapidly growing sport in Australia, and world-wide.

**4.**

4. There are allowances to borrow suitable horses to learn the skills, so you don't need your own horse.

**5.**

5. There are opportunities to compete nationally and internationally.



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# A Brief History of Mounted Archery

Perhaps the most legendary early mounted archers were the Scythians, a collection of aggressive nomad tribes who struck fear up and down the Silk Road in Asia around the 7th century BC.

Horse archery was a useful skill in Asia, but less so in the mountains and forests of Europe because of so many trees

In Japan, the use of the bow had been on foot until around the 4th century when elite soldiers took to fighting on horseback with bows and swords. In the 10th century, samurai would have archery duels on horseback. (NOT what Pony Club will be doing!) Mongol horse archers were deadly in battle. Their horses allowed them to stay out of reach of the enemy, (although they rode small horses) while their bows allowed them to rain down accurate fire. Their enemies developed the manoeuvre of using large shields placed together to try to ward off the arrows raining down on them.

There are many types of arrows and bows. A composite bow is a traditional bow made from horn, wood, and sinew. They are as strong as all wood bows but allow for a shorter length bow.



*Photo: Bianca from Warida Wholistic Wellness has been teaching horse archery to Pony Clubs in South Australia for several years.*

**TODAY, the modern sport** involves riding a horse along a straight or curved track, reins on the horse's neck attached to stretchable rein ties, while the rider is loading arrows into a bow and taking several shots at targets along the track. This can be at walk, trot, canter or gallop depending on the experience level of horse and rider.

Mastery of horse archery involves the ability to 'nock' arrows onto the bowstring whilst moving with the horse and keeping your eye on the target, then aiming whilst subconsciously adjusting for variation in distance from the target and the speed of the horse, and timing the shot with the horse's gait. Participants say it's a lot to think about, but when it all comes together the feeling really is addictive!



**There are plenty of thrilling horse archery videos online; they will give you a feel for what the sport is about.**

# What is horse archery for Pony Club?

- Riding your horse along a roped off track
- Riding hands free
- Loading arrows into a bow without looking, while you ride at walk (perhaps led), trot or faster
- Shooting at targets along the track
- Becoming addicted to the sport!



## How to Get Started

This sport requires many safety measures - but riders say it is worth it for the thrill.

PCA requires Clubs to start in one of two ways; by inviting an experienced horse archery coach to conduct a training day or weekend clinic, to help set the Club off on the right foot. Many of these coaches have their own equipment for use on the day.

OR

In 2022 PCA will also be offering access to online training and training clinics for PCANCAS coaches who want to add this skill to their Preliminary or Level 1 coaching accreditation.

This is all explained in the PCA Horse Archery Rule Book which will be out in February 2022.

In the mean time we have some medieval fun involving archery and jousting for you which requires less strict safety measures - but still some careful pre-training.

Some clubs like Cockatoo Pony Club (right) began by using suction cup arrows, which is less likely cause any injury but still requires riders to have unmounted training using a bow and arrow, and thorough horse 'desensitisation'.

*More next page.*



Right: And while you have the runway why not try jousting? Cockatoo Pony Club used broom handles and pool noodles, and a long suffering stuffed toy on a drum (Reins in one hand for this)

# Before you get to ride and shoot . . . there's practising to do



Archery can be practised using barrels for horses, or simply on foot, before getting in the saddle.



Horses need to get used moving down a 'runway' or track, the rider carrying a bow, shifting in the saddle, the sound of an arrow leaving a bow, and the sound of it hitting a target, AND being ridden without reins. Here archery coach Bianca Stawiarski, from Warida Wholistic Wellness in SA, desensitizes a horse

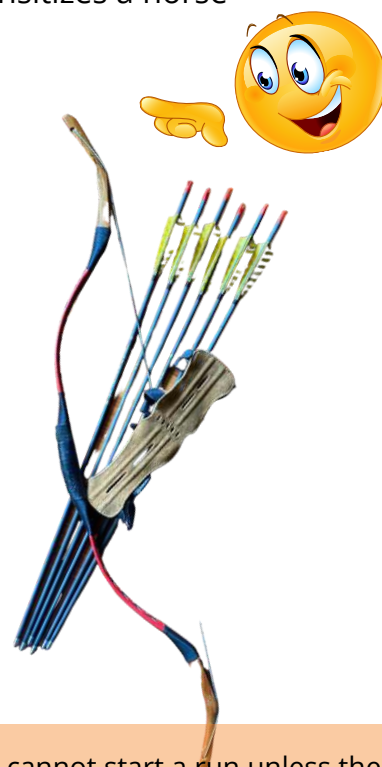
## Equipment

Cockatoo Pony Club has successfully used bow and arrow kits from KMart (cost \$35-\$50); arrows have suction cap ends. *(right)*

While these arrows often bounce off targets, there is less likelihood of injury, and targets can still be scored by watching where the arrow hits. There's no quiver.

*Far right:* Much more sturdy are the kits like this, sold by horse archery coaches who generally have online shops. They have six arrows, bow, quiver and armguard. These coaches are also able to advise on the best horse archery equipment, which is not always the same as ground archery.

Photo: Warida Wholistic Wellness



## Spectator Safety



Riders must follow instructions carefully at all times. A rider cannot start a run unless the person in charge (usually a field marshal but could be the coach) has designated that the area is clear, and the rider is called to take their turn.

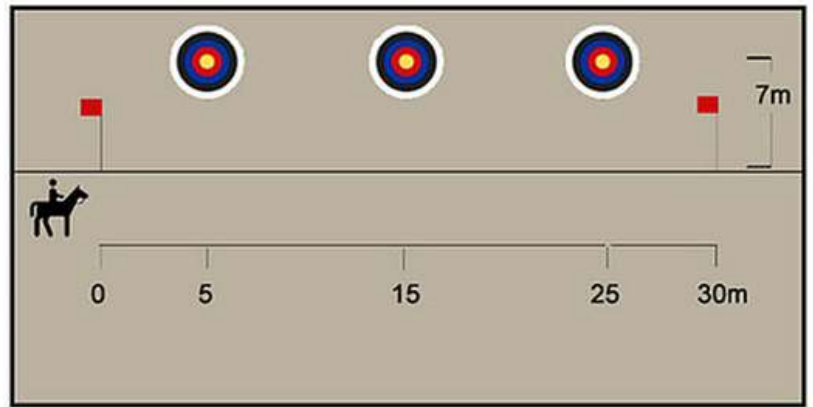
The area in the direction riders are shooting must be clear for 50m, or a bit less if targets are placed at ground level and riders are being led, or walking and trotting.

Appropriate separation (recommended distance 5m) between any spectators and riders be marked out. Anyone found to be shooting towards spectators will be asked to dismount and not be allowed to continue with the session.

# Tracks and Targets



Targets are generally 80cm by 80cm for horse archery. The five rings, from the inside out are worth 5,4,3,2,1 points. They are often placed with the centre of the target at 90cm off the ground, but can be at ground level (safer for learners).



These diagrams show two basic tracks over 30m, which can be set up in a 40m dressage arena.

## Grading for Horse Archery

In 2022, horse and rider combinations will be able to be graded for Horse Archery.

Grades will be:

Level 4 – Walk-Led

Level 3 – Walk

Level 2 – Trot

Level 1\* – Canter/gallop will be available at a later date due to the required coach training, which starts in 2022.



More information will be available in the new PCA Horse Archery Rule Book, available in 2022.

### When a horse is not suitable:

For a training session or competition, horse and rider combinations must be:

- Graded under PCA rules, (see Section 4 for Grading) OR
- Assessed prior to the day or on the day, before taking part in horse archery. This allows for riders to use loan horses.

### Grading involves:

Be capable of riding the horse they are using for horse archery without reins within the runway set up, without posing any significant risk to the rider or others, be able to follow direction well; demonstrate safety procedures for disarming if encountering an issue; and know about the equipment.

## Leading horses during horse archery

Horses can be led at the walk only, (or for short strides at the trot). The person leading must determine the best position for leading depending on the horse's reaction. At times this may be offside and at times this may be nearside. In all cases, safety is paramount. No person leading is allowed to be underneath the shooting position when the rider is loading and shooting.



# Riding without reins - key safety requirement

When riding without reins for horse archery, the rider needs to be able to pick up the reins again quickly if needed, and at the end of the run.

This means the end of the reins needs to be attached to the saddle using stretchable straps, such as tarp or canopy cords available from hardware stores (the pack pictured was from Bunnings).

The top photo shows an appropriate length of rein when the rein ends are tied off around a stretchable rein tie. The bungee cord is attached to the front saddle dees.

Photos: Bianca Stawiarski, PCASA



Jousting pic too



Experience the thrill, like Caitlyn Blumenthal at Horse Archery Australia's annual Bow Camp.  
Photo: Katy Driver

## Training video to get you ready for next year

We have been fortunate to have several horse archery experts help us put together the PCA Horse Archery Rule Book, which will come out in February 2022.

Coaches, parents and riders can get a taste of what is in store by using this link to see a preview of the [12-part online horse archery course](#) run by Hayley Chambers from

Animal Instincts Australia or go to:

<https://outback-equines-online-horse-training.thinkific.com/courses/beginning-horse-archery-with-outback-equines>

With thanks to the following for help with this DOTM and the Horse Archery Rule Book (available Feb 2022):

Pony Club SA, Horse Archery Australia (Katrina Kruse) Warida Wholistic Wellness ((Bianca Stawiarski), Animal Instincts Australia (Hayley Chambers), and the Australian Horse Archery Association (AHAA).

If you are looking for activities to try at your Club or at home, all previous Disciplines we have covered so far are [on our website here:](#) or visit [www.ponyclubaustralia.com.au/sports/disciplineofthemoth](http://www.ponyclubaustralia.com.au/sports/disciplineofthemoth)

