

## Dala Horses and Knife Skills

"Huh?", you say. "What's a Dala horse?"

Well, I'm glad you asked!!! 😊

Dalarna is a region in central Sweden. For at least a century, the area has been world famous for manufacturing excellent high-quality knives. The area also is known for people making wood carvings called Dala horses!

Wood carving is a fun activity to do outdoors while at home or during campouts. Here is a photo of my daughter and me carving Dala horses while sitting on my deck:



Scouts and other family members can improve their knife-use skills while making a Dala horse of their own. (**NOTE:** Each person who does this activity should be able to use a **VERY SHARP** knife carefully and safely. Also **be extremely careful removing the Mora knife from its plastic sheath for the first time!** It may be tightly jammed in the sheath at the factory for shipping, and be very difficult to safely control the first time you pull it from the sheath.)

By the way, for Scouts interested in Wood Carving Merit Badge, carving one of these Dala horses would fulfill one of the two carving project requirements. By the way, I am the Troop's counselor for this Merit Badge.

**Step 1:** For each family member who wants one, order a "Dala Horse carving kit" made by the Swedish Mora Knife company. The kit includes a **VERY SHARP** Mora #120 carving knife along with a wood horse carving blank. Here are a couple of places where you can get these kits, among other sources (I suggest you compare prices):

<https://www.knivesofthenorth.com/products/mora-carving-knife-kit-with-dala-horse>

<https://www.highlandwoodworking.com/morakniv-dala-horse-wood-carving-set.aspx>

**Step 2:** Most people do not realize that there are at least 15 or 20 different ways to hold and safely use a knife. While you do not need to learn all of them, it is a good idea to learn several basic knife grips useful for making various types of cuts in wood. Here are places you can learn more about knife grips and various types of wood cuts:

- Read the BSA Wood Carving Merit Badge pamphlet:  
<https://www.scribd.com/document/405381192/wood-carving-merit-badge-pamphlet-35967-pdf>
- View some or all of the short 16 videos made by the Swedish woodcarver, Jogge Sundqvist, available on the Mora Knife Company's YouTube channel. Here's the playlist link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoaPpRkFfg5WkjHrJZ02ooSH16nV2-TBU>

**Step 3:** After you finish carving your horse, you can smooth the knife marks with sandpaper, or you can leave the knife marks showing. Paint your horse or leave it natural wood colored. Search the Internet for other images of painted Dala horses. Here is an example of a carved and sanded horse, along with a photo of some painted horses. Have fun! (**And carve safely!**)

