Wild Things

Options for Animal Companions

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Alex Riggs

Joshua Zaback

ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

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Several places in this book refer to one or more classes, feats, spells, items, or other content found in other books, either other books published by Necromancers of the Northwest, or, more commonly, books published by Paizo. Any content that can be found in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook or Pathfinder Bestiary are not specially noted as such. Any content that cannot be found in either this book or one of those two books will have a superscript denotation, indicating what book it can be found in. These notations are abbreviated. The following list explains what book each abbreviation is associated with.

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AA1: Advanced Arcana Volume 1	APG: Advanced Player's Guide	LV: Liber Vampyr
AA2: Advanced Arcana Volume 2	ARG: Advanced Race Guide	NA12: Necromancer's Almanac 2012
AA3: Advanced Arcana Volume 3	B2: Bestiary 2	NA13: Necromancer's Almanac 2013
AA4: Advanced Arcana Volume 4	B3: Bestiary 3	UC: Ultimate Combat
ACG: Advanced Class Guide	B4: Bestiary 4	UM: Ultimate Magic

Introduction

There are many facets to character creations, and the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* provides us with lots of different tools to help make one character feel different from another. A character's race and class are the most obvious ones, followed by one's choice of feats and skills, and, if one has them, spells. Optional things like traits, alternate racial abilities, and such allow for even more customization. From the beginning, *Pathfinder* classes have confronted players with more choices and options than their counterparts in the 3.5 OGL, and that trend has only grown over time, with nearly every class now offering menus of special class abilities to choose from every other level, a major bloodline-like class feature with several options that dramatically change the nature of the class, or both.

One element of a character, both flavorfully and mechanically, which is often overlooked is the character's animal companion. Not all characters have them, of course, but at the time that this book is printed, they are available to clerics, druids, paladins, rangers, cavaliers, inquisitors, and hunters, plus any other classes that may be able to get them through archetypes or similar means. While they may not belong to every character, they are, or at least have the potential to be, a large part of any character that has one.

Unlike many of the player options available for *Pathfinder*, however, animal companions have not changed much since the beginning of the game, and have fallen somewhat behind in terms of how many options they provide, and how much customization is available. While animal companions are much more customizable than many players realize (there seem to be plenty of groups that completely forget that they get feats), and there is certainly no shortage of different animal types to choose from (www.d2opfsrd.com lists over 100 different types of animal companions from Paizo books alone!), it's still not on the same level that players have come to expect from the other aspects of their character.

This book aims to bring animal companions more into the spotlight, and provide players who are interested in fleshing out their animal companions with some tools that will help them to do so.

The first section of the book reimagines the animal companion rules presented in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* as if it were itself a class that an animal companion could take, and presents seven new, alternate classes that a character's animal companion might use, instead, from the fearsome beast to the stalwart sentinel. Each of these animal companion classes has unique class features and abilities, and many of them offer different kinds of Hit Dice, base attack and saving throw progressions, and skills per level.

Sidebar: Using Animal Companion Classes

We have taken great care to keep the various animal companion classes presented here at the same relative power level as a standard animal companion, and we are confident that most gaming groups will not find that this material makes characters with animal companions significantly more powerful (although they may become more versatile, or slightly more focused on their chosen role, and they will certainly be different).

That said, some GMs may be concerned about using any content that makes animal companions more effective, especially when those animal companions belong to characters with one of the more powerful classes, such as the druid. We recommend that these GMs consider being judicious when determining which characters can gain access to the animal classes presented in this book.

Though druids may not need any additional firepower in their arsenal, several of the other classes that gain animal companions are notably weaker than some other classes, such as rangers and hunters. Other classes, like paladins, are more strictly limited in what type of animal companion they receive. Even if you disallow this content for certain classes, consider allowing it to these weaker or more limited classes, or offering the ability to use this content as a potential incentive for players of druids and clerics to avoid taking the most powerful options and keep a relatively close balance with the other members of the party.

After that, we present a variety of new feats, which have been divided into three sections. The first section, animal feats, contains feats that are specifically designed for animal companions and other creatures of the animal type. The second section includes a variety of general feats intended for characters that have animal companions, which allow them to get greater use out of their animal companion. Finally, the third section of feats includes a number of teamwork feats that are intended specifically to be taken by animal companions and their trainers, allowing the pair to work together in ways that other teams simply cannot.

Third, since animal companions and spellcasting largely go hand in hand, this book contains a selection of spells designed to interact with animal companions in various ways.

The final section of the book focuses on ways to make your animal companion stand out in roleplay, rather than mechanically, and discusses some of the common issues that make an animal companion difficult to bring to life at the table, and how to overcome them.

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New Animal Classes

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In many ways, the ways in which an animal companion increases in power as its handler increases in levels is a lot like a very specialized class. As the animal companion's handler gains levels, the animal companion's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, and saving throws increase, it gains skills and feats, and also gains a variety of special abilities. However, where players have numerous classes to choose from, animal companions have only the one.

The following section presents new classes for animal companions, each with their own sets of special abilities and powers which set them apart from other animal companions. More than simply archetypes, these animal companion classes offer differing progressions for your animal companion's base attack bonus, saving throws, available skills, and special animal companion abilities. Be sure to check the table for the associated animal companion class for more information about its changes to progressions. An animal companion with a class improves in power as its handler does, just like any other animal companion, and all references to levels in the class section refer to the handler's level.

Note that the abilities listed for each class completely replace the abilities that an animal companion normally gains. Each animal companion class provides its own sets of benefits, different from the default animal companion benefits. If an animal companion class does not list an ability that is normally gained by an animal companion with the default animal companion class, an animal companion with that class does not gain that ability. Unlike player characters, an animal companion cannot "multiclass." It is restricted to a single animal companion class.

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Fearsome Beast

Larger and more aggressive than other animal companions, fearsome beasts are powerful melee combatants who love to join the fray on their master's behalf. As a result of specialized training combined with a reckless, often brutish, nature, fearsome beasts can deliver powerful attacks, though these aggressive tactics can leave them vulnerable to attack themselves. and and a

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Hit Die: d10

Class Skills

A fearsome beast's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Fly (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

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Augmented Animal (Ex): A fearsome beast is larger and more powerful than other animals of its kind, but is not actually physiologically different from their lesser kin. A fearsome beast's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as an animal for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Table	1-1:	Fearsome Beast Animal Companion Base Statistics									
Class								Natural	Str	Bonus	
Level	HD	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Skills	Feats	Armor Bonus	Bonus	Tricks	Special
ıst	2	+2	+3	+0	+0	2	1	+0	+0	1	Frenzy, link, share feats
2nd	3	+3	+3	+1	+1	3	2	+0	+0	1	-
3rd	3	+3	+3	+1	+1	3	2	+2	+1	2	-
4th	4	+4	+4	+1	+1	4	2	+1	+1	2	Ability score increase
5th	5	+5	+4	+1	+1	5	3	+1	+1	2	-
6th	6	+6	+5	+2	+2	6	3	+2	+2	3	Ferocious
7th	6	+6	+5	+2	+2	6	3	+2	+2	3	-
8th	7	+7	+5	+2	+2	7	4	+2	+2	3	-
9th	8	+8	+6	+2	+2	8	4	+3	+3	4	Ability score increase
10th	9	+9	+6	+3	+3	9	5	+3	+3	4	-
<u>11th</u>	9	+9	+6	+3	+3	9	5	+3	+3	4	Fearsome foe
12th	10	+10	+7	+3	+3	10	5	+4	+4	5	-
<u>13th</u>	11	+11	+7	+3	+3	11	6	+4	+4	5	-
14th	12	+12	+8	+4	+4	12	6	+4	+4	5	Ability score increase
15th	12	+12	+8	+4	+4	12	6	+5	+5	6	Fatal frenzy
<u>16th</u>	13	+13	+8	+4	+4	13	7	+5	+5	6	-
<u>17th</u>	14	+14	+9	+4	+4	14	7	+5	+5	6	
18th	15	+15	+9	+5	+5	15	8	+6	+6		-
<u>19th</u>	15	+15	+9	+5	+5	15	8	+6	+6	7	-
20th	16	+16	+10	+5	+5	16	8	+6	+6	7	Ability score increase, fearsome might

Frenzy (Ex): A fearsome beast is savage, bloodthirsty, and ready for combat. A fearsome beast gains the attack trick as a bonus trick. Additionally, beginning at 3rd level, a fearsome beast gains a +1 moral bonus to attack and damage rolls for 1 round whenever it is handled to use the attack trick.

Share Feats (Ex): A handler can share certain feats with a fearsome beast. As a standard action, the handler can bestow some of her prowess upon her fearsome beast animal companion, allowing it to gain the benefit of a single combat feat she knows, and which her fearsome beast animal companion meets the prerequisites for. The fearsome beast retains these benefits for 1 minute. At 5th level, and every 5 levels thereafter, the handler can bestow an additional combat feat in this way when she uses this ability.

Link (Ex): A handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion.

Ferocious (Ex): A fearsome beast fights to the bitter end, becoming more deadly as it suffers greater wounds. At 6th level, a fearsome beast gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls when reduced to fewer than half its maximum hit points. This bonus is doubled when the fearsome beast is at or below o hit points. Finally, a fearsome beast can choose to become stable when reduced to o hit points or below, but is exhausted for 24 hours thereafter. **Fearsome Foe (Ex):** A fearsome beast is a more aggressive and dangerous combatant than other animal companions. At uth level, a fearsome beast chooses a single natural attack it possesses. It may make an additional attack with that natural attack as part of a full-attack action.

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Fatal Frenzy (Ex): A fearsome beast is capable of entering a state of primal fury which turns it into a whirlwind of claws and teeth, but drains its body of stamina. At 15th level, a fearsome beast can be commanded to enter a state of fatal frenzy as a swift action, with a DC 30 Handle Animal check. Once a fearsome beast enters this primal state, it continues to engage in a fatal frenzy for 1 minute, or until a second DC 30 Handle Animal check is made to stop it. While in this state, the fearsome beast gains a +6 bonus to attack and damage rolls, but suffers a -6 penalty to AC, and suffers 10 points of damage at the end of each round.

Fearsome Might (Ex): A fearsome beast is capable of delivering truly lethal blows. At 20th level, a fearsome beast chooses a natural attack it possesses. Its critical multiplier for that attack is increased by 1.

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Hunting Companion

A hunting companion is exceptionally skilled in hunting down and tracking creatures for its master. Most hunters are animals naturally gifted in the ways of stalking, and they usually have the scent special quality, though this is not always the case. In addition to being skilled trackers, these hunting companions are experts at bringing down their foes. Hunters make ideal animal companions for druids and hunters who have the abilities to fully support the hunting companion.

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

A hunting companion's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Fly (Dex), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Swim (Str), and Survival.

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Augmented Animal (Ex): A hunting companion has heightened senses, focuses on hunting down one creature at a time, and is slightly less skilled in large-scale combat than other animal companions. A hunting companion's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as an animal for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Expert Tracker (Ex): A hunting companion is able to easily track creatures over long distances. A hunting companion adds 1/2 its handler's level on all Survival checks made to find and follow tracks. Additionally, the hunting companion suffers no penalty for following a cold trail if it has been less than 24 hours since the trail was made, even if it has rained since the tracks were made. **Improved Scent (Ex):** A hunting companion is a master of using its nose to find its prey. A hunting companion gains the scent special ability, if it did not have it already. If it did already have the scent special ability, that ability improves in a number of ways: the range at which its scent ability functions is doubled, and the hunting companion can use its scent special ability quicker than other animals, allowing it to use scent to note the direction of a creature as a swift action. Further, once it pinpoints the location of a creature using its scent special ability, it can continue to keep track of that creature's location as a free action for as long as the target remains within range of the hunting companion's scent special ability.

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Link (Ex): A handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion.

Predatory Instincts (Ex): A hunting companion is ideally suited to hunting down specific prey and can utilize its animal instincts to better track and dispose of a single individual. Beginning at 3rd level, the hunting companion can be issued a special hunt command (using Handle Animal) in order to hunt down a single creature. The hunting companion and its handler must be within 60 feet of either the creature in question or tracks left by that creature, in order to use this ability. The DC for the Handle Animal check is equal to 10 + the target creature's CR. If the hunting companion is combat-trained, the handler gains a +4 bonus on this Handle Animal check.

If this check is successful, the hunting companion can track the target creature while moving at up to twice its speed, without incurring any penalty on the Survival check for moving at high speeds. Additionally, the hunting companion gains a +1 morale bonus to AC against attacks made by the hunted creature, and gains a +1 morale bonus on saving throws made to resist that creature's spells and abilities, as well as a +1 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls made against that creature. The hunting companion

Table 1-2: Hunting Companion Animal Companion Base Statistics Natural Str/ Armor Class Dex Bonus **Bonus Tricks** Level HD BAB Fort Ref Will Skills Feats Bonus **Special** ıst 2 +0 Link, expert tracker, improved scent ± 1 +3 +3 +0 2 +01 2nd 3 +2+3 +3 +13 2 +0 +0 1 **Predatory instincts** 3rd 3 +2 +3 +3 +13 2 +2 +0 2 4th Ability score increase +4 +0 2 4 +3 +4 +12 +2 4 5th 5 +3 +4 +4 $^{+1}$ 5 3 +2 +0 2 6th +4 Devotion 6 +5 +5 +2 6 3 +4 +1 3 7th 6 6 +4 +5 +5 +2 3 +4 $^{+1}$ 3 8th 7 +5 +5 +5 +27 +4 $^{+1}$ 4 3 8 8 Ability score increase 9th +6+6+6+6 +1+24 4 10th 9 +6 +6+6 9 +6 +1 +3 5 4 11th +6 +6 +6 +6 Multiattack 9 +3 9 5 +14 12th +7 +8+2 10 +7 +7 +3 10 5 _ 5 +8 6 +8 13th 11 +7 +7 +311 +2 5 Ability score increase 6 14th 12 +8+8 +8 +9 12 +2 5 +4 +86 15th 12 +8+10 6 Catch prey +9 +4 12 +2 +8 16th +87 6 13 +9 13 +10 +2 +4 6 17th +10 +10 14 +9 +9 +4 14 7 +218th +11 8 15 +9 +9 +5 15 +12 +3 7 _ 8 19th 15 +11 +9+9 +5 15 +12+3 Ability score increase, great hunter 8 +12 20th 16 +12 +10 +10 +5 16 +3 7

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can only hunt one creature at a time using this ability; if the handler uses Handle Animal to command it to hunt a second target, the hunting companion immediately loses the bonuses against the first target. Otherwise, these bonuses last for 24 hours, or until the target is slain.

Devotion: A hunting companion is a devoted follower of its handler. At 6th level, the hunting companion gains a +4 morale bonus on Will saves against enchantment spells and effects.

Multiattack: A hunting companion is able to attack effectively with all of its natural attacks. At 11th level, the hunting companion gains Multiattack as a bonus feat if it has three or more natural attacks. If it has two or fewer natural attacks, it chooses one of its natural attacks, and can make an additional attack with that natural attack each round.

Catch Prey (Ex): A hunting companion is an expert at hunting down and killing its handler's enemies. At 15th level, if the hunting companion's handler has the quarry class feature, then whenever she uses her quarry class feature, the hunting companion gains the benefits of that class feature against the creature targeted by the quarry ability, as well. Additionally, regardless of whether or not the hunting companion's handler has the quarry class feature or not, the bonus to AC, saving throws, and attack and damage rolls granted to the hunting companion by its predatory instinct class feature is increased by +1.

Great Hunter (Ex): At 20th level, a hunting companion gains a single favored enemy, as the ranger class feature. Additionally, if it chose a favored enemy that the handler has also selected as a favored enemy, then they both increase their favored enemy bonuses against that creature by +2.

Noble Steed

Though often used for mounts, the noble steed animal companion does not necessarily have to serve in that capacity to benefit from this class, which focuses on working with the handler to deliver a deadly, in-your-face assault. The ideal noble steed is a fast creature, suitable as a mount, with more than one natural attack, though other animal companions may still benefit from this class. Good choices for noble steeds include big cats, horses, and elephants. いこうに

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

The noble steed's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Fly (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Augmented Animal (Ex): A noble steed stresses relentless aggression and teamwork. A noble steed's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as an animal for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Link (Ex): A noble steed's handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion.

Table 1-3: Noble Steed Animal Companion Base Statistics

	Class Level	HD	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Skills	Feats	Natural Armor Bonus	Str/Dex Bonus	Bonus Tricks	Special
2	1st	2	+1	+0	+3	+0	2	1	+0	+0	0	Link, pounce, riding bond
17	2nd	3	+2	+1	+3	+1	3	2	+0	+0	0	-
	3rd	3	+2	+1	+3	+1	3	2	+2	+0	0	Defensive teamwork
1	4th	4	+3	+1	+4	+1	4	2	+2	+0	0	Ability score increase
2	5th	5	+3	+1	+4	+1	5	3	+2	+0	1	
_	6th	6	+4	+2	+5	+2	6	3	+4	+1	1	Devotion
4	7th	6	+4	+2	+5	+2	6	3	+4	+1	1	-
	8th	7	+5	+2	+5	+2	7	4	+4	+1	1	-
~	9th	8	+6	+2	+6	+2	8	4	+6	+1	2	Ability score increase, improved pounce
_	10th	9	+6	+3	+6	+3	9	5	+6	+1	2	
	11th	9	+6	+3	+6	+3	9	5	+6	+1	2	-
)	12th	10	+7	+3	+7	+3	10	5	+8	+2	2	
	13th	11	+8	+3	+7	+3	11	6	+8	+2	2	-
	14th	12	+9	+4	+8	+4	12	6	+8	+2	2	Ability score increase
	15th	12	+9	+4	+8	+4	12	6	+10	+2	3	
_	16th	13	+9	+4	+8	+4	13	7	+10	+2	3	-
1	17th	14	+10	+4	+9	+4	14	7	+10	+2	3	-
	18th	15	+11	+5	+9	+5	15	8	+12	+3	3	-
_	19th	15	+11	+5	+9	+5	15	8	+12	+3	3	-
	20th	16	+12	+5	+10	+5	16	8	+1 <mark>2</mark>	+3	3	Ability score increase, spirited charge

Pounce (Ex): A noble steed is capable of making an unrelenting assault when it charges. A noble steed gains the pounce special attack, if it did not already possess it, and while serving as a mount may make use of its pounce attack whenever its handler charges a creature while mounted on the noble steed, without need of a Ride check. If the noble steed already possessed the pounce special attack, it instead gains an additional +1 bonus to all attack rolls made while charging.

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Riding Bond (Ex): A noble steed is an excellent mount and forms a special bond with its handler. The noble steed's handler can take 10 on all Ride checks made while mounted on the noble steed.

Defensive Teamwork (Ex): A noble steed and its handler work together to protect one another. At 3rd level, both the noble steed and the handler grant soft cover to the other while the handler is mounted on the noble steed. At 15th level, this ability improves to provide regular cover.

Devotion: A noble steed companion is a close friend and boon companion to the handler. At 6th level, the noble steed gains a +4 morale bonus on Will saves against enchantment spells and effects.

Improved Pounce (Ex): A noble steed is able to pounce on its foes with increased power. At 9th level, when the noble steed uses its pounce ability, it gains a +2 bonus on all damage rolls.

Spirited Charge (Ex): A noble steed charges with the spirit of a mighty warrior. At 20th level, whenever it makes a charge attack, the noble steed inflicts twice the normal amount of damage on a successful hit.

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Sage Counselor

Sage counselors are the stuff of legends, usually found serving druids and shamans who have devoted themselves to hermitic lifestyles and traditions. Occasionally, sage counselors are found in service to remote temples or serve as guardians to good-hearted wanderers. In any case, sage counselors are especially in tune with magic and possess some limited power to channel spiritual energies. The sage counselor's unique circumstances make them somewhat poor combatants on their own, but allow them to take great advantage of magical might.

Hit Die: d6

Class Skills

The sage counselor's class skills are Climb (Str), Fly (Dex), Perception (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Magical Beast (Ex): A sage counselor has been touched by a magical or otherworldly creature, and has the inherent ability to carry spiritual energy. A sage counselor's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as a magical beast for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Table 1-4: Sage Counselor Animal Companion Base Statistics

Class								Insight Armor	Con	
Level	HD	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Skills	Feats	Bonus	Bonus	Special
ıst	2	+1	+0	+3	+3	2	1	+0	+0	Link, magical conduit, share spells
2nd	3	+1	+1	+3	+3	3	2	+0	+0	
3rd	3	+1	+1	+3	+3	3	2	+2	+1	Share metamagic
4th	4	+2	+1	+4	+4	4	2	+2	+1	Ability score increase
5th	5	+2	+1	+4	+4	5	3	+2	+1	Deliver touch spells
6th	6	+3	+2	+5	+5	6	3	+4	+2	-
7th	6	+3	+2	+5	+5	6	3	+4	+2	-
8th	7	+3	+2	+5	+5	7	4	+4	+2	
9th	8	+4	+2	+6	+6	8	4	+6	+3	Ability score increase
10th	9	+4	+3	+6	+6	9	5	+6	+3	
11th	9	+4	+3	+6	+6	9	5	+6	+3	Greater share spells
12th	10	+5	+3	+7	+7	10	5	+8	+4	
13th	11	+5	+3	+7	+7	11	6	+8	+4	-
14th	12	+6	+4	+8	+8	12	6	+8	+4	Ability score increase
15th	12	+6	+4	+8	+8	12	6	+10	+5	Cast through
16th	13	+6	+4	+8	+8	13	7	+10	+5	-
17th	14	+7	+4	+9	+9	14	7	+10	+5	
18th	15	+7	+5	+9	+9	15	8	+12	+6	
19th	15	+7	+5	+9	+9	15	8	+12	+6	
20th	16	+8	+5	+10	+10	16	8	+12	+6	Ability score increase, awaken

Link (Ex): A sage counselor's handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion.

Magical Conduit (Ex): A sage counselor is better able to retain the power of magical spells. Whenever the handler casts a spell on the sage counselor with the share spells ability, that spell is treated as though its caster level were 1 higher than it normally is.

Share Spells (Ex): The handler may cast a spell with a target of "you" on her animal companion (as a touch range spell) instead of on herself. A handler may cast spells on her animal companion, even if the spells normally do not affect creatures of the companion's type (animal). Spells cast in this way must come from a class that grants an animal companion. This ability does not allow the animal to benefit from abilities that are not spells, even if they function like spells.

Share Metamagic (Ex): A sage counselor is especially receptive to having magical spells cast upon it, and as such it is easier to apply complex Metamagic to spells cast through a bond with a sage counselor. Beginning at 3rd level, whenever the handler uses the share spells ability to cast a spell upon the sage counselor, the handler may apply any Metamagic effect which would increase the spell's level by an amount equal to 1/3 the sage counselor's level as a free action, without actually increasing the spell's level.

Deliver Touch Spells (Ex): A sage counselor is able to use its bond with its handler to hold the charge of certain potent touch spells. At 5th level, the sage counselor can deliver touch spells on the handler's behalf. If the handler and the sage counselor are within 10 feet of each other at the time the handler casts a touch spell, she can designate the sage counselor as the "toucher." The sage counselor can then deliver the touch spell just as the handler would. As usual, if the handler casts another spell before the touch is delivered, the touch spell dissipates.

Greater Share Spells (Ex): A sage counselor has the ability to gain a glimmer of its handler's spell power in order to empower itself. At 11th level, whenever the handler cast a spell upon herself (including spells with a target other than "you") the handler may choose to have that spell also affect the sage counselor, even if that spell could not normally affect it. The sage counselor can only benefit from 1 extra spell in this way at a time.

Cast Through (Ex): At 15th level, the sage counselor can allow the handler to cast spells through it. At 15th level, any spell the handler casts can originate from the sage counselor, though both the handler and the sage counselor must have line of sight and line of effect.

Awaken (Sp): Sage counselors eventually gain a semblance of awareness and personality, which arises late in their career. At 20th level, the sage counselor becomes awakened in a manner similar to the *awaken* spell, with the following exceptions. The bonus Hit Dice gained by the sage counselor are sage counselor Hit Dice, and the sage counselor remains the handler's animal companion, rather than becoming its own character. As such, the sage counselor retains all abilities granted from the sage counselor animal companion class. Additionally, because the sage counselor awakens on its own, it does not count as an awakened animal serving the handler. As such the druid can awaken another animal.

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Sly Varmint

A sly varmint is an animal companion that is gifted in stealth and retrieval, making it an excellent thief, scout, or spy. While a sly varmint has special training that allows it to approach undetected, throw off scents, and even perform tasks requiring exceptional manual dexterity, the sly varmint lacks the combat skills of most other animal companions. Most sly varmints are smaller, agile animals such as baboons, birds, and dire rats.

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

The sly varmint's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Disable Device (Dex), Fly (Dex), Perception (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Stealth (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 8 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Augmented Animal (Ex): A sly varmint is less offensively inclined than other animal companions, but makes up for this with a greater selection of skills. A sly varmint's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as an animal for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Sidebar: Sly Varmint Skill Ranks

Unlike the default animal companion (as well as the other animal companion classes in this book), the sly varmint's gains enough skill ranks that its Intelligence score is likely to make a difference on how many skill ranks it gains each level. As a result, the number of skill ranks it receives with each new Hit Dice are much more likely vary from one animal companion to another. Table 1-1: Sly Varmint Animal Companion Base Statistics assumes that your animal companion has 2 Intelligence (a -4 Intelligence modifier, giving it 4 skill ranks per Hit Dice), but if your animal companion has a different Intelligence score, you may need to adjust the number of skill ranks it receives accordingly. 9

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Sly Varmint Path: A sly varmint selects a single path, which grants it additional abilities.

Scout: The scout path indicates that the sly varmint is skilled in tracking and looking ahead. At 1st level, a sly varmint with the scout path is treated as having improved evasion, but only for the purposes of attacks and abilities from traps. At 10th level, the scout can move up to its full speed or run while using the Stealth skill, without incurring a penalty to its Stealth check. At 20th level, the sly varmint may take 20 on Disable Device checks made to disarm traps.

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Table	1-5: 5	ly Var	mint.	Anim						
Class								Dex	Bonus	
Level	HD	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Skills	Feats	Bonus	Tricks	Special
ıst	2	+1	+3	+3	+0	8	1	+0	1	Cutpurse path, link, talented, trapfinder
2nd	3	+2	+3	+3	+1	12	2	+0	1	
3rd	3	+2	+3	+3	+1	12	2	+1	2	Evasion
4th	4	+3	+4	+4	+1	16	2	+1	2	Ability score increase
5th	5	+3	+4	+4	+1	20	3	+1	2	Sneak attack +1d6
6th	6	+4	+5	+5	+2	24	3	+2	3	
7th	6	+4	+5	+5	+2	24	3	+2	3	-
8th	7	+5	+5	+5	+2	28	4	+2	3	
9th	8	+6	+6	+6	+2	32	4	+3	4	Ability score increase, danger sense
ıoth	9	+6	+6	+6	+3	36	5	+3	4	Sneak attack +2d6
11th	9	+6	+6	+6	+3	36	5	+3	4	
12th	10	+7	+7	+7	+3	40	5	+4	5	
<u>13</u> th	11	+8	+7	+7	+3	44	6	+4	5	
14th	12	+9	+8	+8	+4	48	6	+4	5	Ability score increase
15th	12	+9	+8	+8	+4	48	6	+5	6	Improved evasion, sneak attack +3d6
16th	13	+9	+8	+8	+4	52	7	+5	6	
17th	14	+10	+9	+9	+4	56	7	+5	6	
18th	15	+11	+9	+9	+5	60	8	+6	7	
19th	15	+11	+9	+9	+5	60	8	+6	7	
20th	16	+12	+10	+10	+5	64	8	+6	7	Ability score increase, sneak attack +4d6

Spy: The spy path indicates that the sly varmint is skilled in observation and information gathering. At 1st level, a sly varmint with the spy path treats the maximum visual range of any terrain as twice what it normally is, and suffers only half the penalty to Perception checks due to distance. At 10th level, the sly varmint can study a creature for 3 consecutive rounds (a standard action) in order to learn its weaknesses; if it does so, for the next hour the sly varmint and its handler gain a +2 bonus on all attack and damage rolls against the target of this ability. At 20th level, the sly varmint can see things as they really are, as with the spell *true seeing*. They can use this ability for a total of 1 hour per day, which must be spent in 10-minute increments.

Thief: The thief path indicates that a sly varmint is skilled at relieving others of their possessions. At 1st level, a sly varmint with the thief path treats its base attack bonus as being equal to its handler's level when making a steal combat maneuver, and it does not provoke attacks of opportunity when it uses the steal combat maneuver. At 10th level, the sly varmint can take 10 on Sleight of Hand checks. Finally, at 20th level, whenever the sly varmint successfully uses the Steal combat maneuver as a swift action. If it does, it gains a +10 bonus to CMB for the purposes of the second combat maneuver.

Link (Ex): A handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion. **Talented**: A sly varmint is an exceptionally talented individual and has access to a number of unique abilities which suit its specialties and individual skills. Whenever a sly varmint gains a feat, it may instead choose to gain a single rogue talent for which it meets all the prerequisites. A sly varmint is treated as a rogue of its level for the purposes of feats and rogue talents which require a rogue level as a prerequisite.

Trapfinder (Ex): A sly varmint has an exceptional gift for spotting traps. A sly varmint adds half its handler's level to any Perception check made to find traps, and can find traps with a DC of higher than 20. If the sly varmint's handler is within 10 feet, it can use its magical affinity with the handler to sense nearby magic, allowing it to detect magical traps. A sly varmint can alert the handler to the presence of a trap it discovers as a free action if the handler is within 10 feet; otherwise, alerting others to the presence of the trap requires a move action. A sly varmint cannot use thieves' tools to disable devices unless the animal could normally use thieves' tools effectively. A sly varmint which detects a trap can choose to deliberately set it off; if it does, and the trap would normally reset automatically, it is treated as being bypassed for the next 10 minutes.

Evasion (Ex): A sly varmint can dodge out of the way to avoid danger. At 3rd level, if the sly varmint is subjected to an attack that normally allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, it takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw.

Sneak Attack (Ex): A sly varmint has a limited ability to sneak attack in a fashion similar to the rogue. At 5th

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level, the sly varmint gains +1d6 sneak attack. At 10th level, and every 5 levels thereafter, this amount increases by 1d6; otherwise, this ability functions like the rogue ability of the same name.

Danger Sense (Ex): A sly varmint has the supernatural ability to sense danger and can alert its handler to the presence of nearby threats, as well as gain an advantage when defending against them. At 9th level, the sly varmint becomes aware of potential threats as though affected by the spell *foresight*, though it does not gain the +2 bonus to AC and Reflex saves.

Improved Evasion (Ex): A sly varmint can escape most danger without a scratch. At 15th level, when subjected to an attack that normally allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a sly varmint takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and only half damage if the saving throw fails.

Spirit Guide

While many of those who attract animal companions choose to focus primarily on the natural world, there are many religious and spiritual figures who attract animals of spiritual and religious significance to aid them in their endeavors. Spirit guides have a spark of the otherworldly about them, and are obviously different from normal animals, radiating the essence of the ethos and philosophy with which they associate.

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

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A spirit guide's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Escape Artist (Dex), Fly (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 2 + Int modifier.

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Table 1-6: Spirit Guide Animal Companion Base Statistics

Class Level	HD	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Skills	Feats	Natural Armor Bonus	Str/Cha Bonus	Spells	Special
ıst	2	+1	+3	+0	+3	2	1	+0	+0	0	Aura, link, spiritual guidance
2nd	3	+2	+3	+1	+3	3	2	+0	+0	0	- 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1
3rd	3	+2	+3	+1	+3	3	2	+1	+1	0	Protection from alignment +2
_4th	4	+3	+4	+1	+4	4	2	+1	+1	0	Ability score increase
_5th	5	+3	+4	+1	+4	5	3	+1	+1	1	
6th	6	+4	+5	+2	+5	6	3	+2	+2	1	Devotion
7th	6	+4	+5	+2	+5	6	3	+2	+2	1	-
8th	7	+5	+5	+2	+5	7	4	+2	+2	1	Protection from alignment +4
9th	8	+6	+6	+2	+6	8	4	+3	+3	2	Ability score increase, aligned strike 3/day
10th	9	+6	+6	+3	+6	9	5	+3	+3	2	-
<u>11th</u>	9	+6	+6	+3	+6	9	5	+3	+3	2	
<u>12th</u>	10	+7	+7	+3	+7	10	5	+4	+4	2	Aligned strike 4/day
13th	11	+8	+7	+3	+7	11	6	+4	+4	3	Protection from alignment +6
14th	12	+9	+8	+4	+8	12	6	+4	+4	3	Ability score increase
<u>15th</u>	12	+9	+8	+4	+8	12	6	+5	+5	3	Aligned strike 5/day, resist aligned spells
16th	13	+9	+8	+4	+8	13	7	+5	+5	3	-
17th	14	+10	+9	+4	+9	14	7	+5	+5	4	-
18th	15	+11	+9	+5	+9	15	8	+6	+6	4	Aligned strike 6/day, protection from alignment +8
19th	15	+11	+9	+5	+9	15	8	+6	+6	4	
20th	16	+12	+10	+5	+10	16	8	+6	+6	4	Ability score increase, spirit infusion

Class Features

Magical Beast (Ex): A spirit guide has been touched by a deity or other creature of the outer planes, and carries within it the essence of that creature's philosophy. A spirit guide's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as a magical beast for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Aura (Su): Each spirit guide is associated with a single alignment element (chaos, evil, good, or law), and radiates an aura of that alignment as though it were a cleric whose level is equal to the spirit guide's Hit Dice. The alignment element that the spirit guide is associated with must be one that is part of its handler's alignment (for example, a neutral good handler could only have a spirit guide associated with good, whereas a lawful good handler could have a spirit quide that was associated with either good or law). A true neutral handler cannot have an animal companion with the spirit guide class. Once chosen, the spirit guide's alignment element cannot be changed. If the handler's alignment changes in such a way that her alignment no longer includes the spirit guide's alignment element, then the bond between the handler and the animal companion is broken. The handler can either gain a new one (through the normal method of replacing an animal companion), or can re-establish the bond after receiving the benefits of an atonement spell and restoring her alignment.

Link (Ex): A handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion. **Spiritual Guidance (Su):** A spirit guide has an innate sense of right and wrong, as seen through the eyes of the alignment element that it is associated with. It intuitively knows when its handler is considering taking an action that is opposed to its alignment element, and will attempt to dissuade the handler from performing such actions. Typically, it does so by barking or whining, gently tugging at her ankle, or some other non-verbal communication, but the strong bond between the spirit guide and its handler ensures that the message is always clear. The spirit guide never takes any steps to actually hinder its handler, and this does not interfere with the handler's actions.

Protection from Alignment (Sp): Beginning at 3rd level, a spirit guide is constantly affected by a ward that protects it from creatures of the opposing alignment. If the spirit guide is aligned with chaos, this functions as *protection from law*. Similarly, evil spirit guides receive *protection from evil*, and lawful spirit guides receive *protection from chaos*. At 8th level, and every 5 levels thereafter, the deflection bonus to AC granted by this ability increases by +2. All other aspects of the spell (including the resistance bonus to saving throws) remain unaltered.

The spirit guide's caster level for the purposes of this effect is equal to its Hit Dice, and if the effect is dispelled, it resumes automatically one minute later.

Spells (Sp): As an innately magical being, a spirit guide is able to use some small amount of magic. At 5th level, a spirit guide may choose a single 1st-level spell from the cleric spell list, which it can cast once per day as a spell-like ability. Its caster level for this purpose is equal to its Hit Dice, and its saving throw DCs are Charisma-based. At 9th level, and every 4 levels thereafter, the spirit guide may choose a single spell of the next-highest spell level from the cleric spell list,

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which it can also cast once per day (giving it a total of one 1st-level spell, one 2nd-level spell, one 3rd-level spell, and one 4th-level spell at 17th level). A spirit guide cannot learn or cast any spell with an alignment descriptor that is different from its associated alignment element (for example, a good spirit guide could not choose a spell with the chaos, evil, or law descriptors).

Devotion: A spirit guide is a devoted to its handler and the faith they mutually serve. At 6th level, the spirit guide gains a +4 morale bonus on Will saves against enchantment spells and effects.

Aligned Strike (Su): Beginning at 9th level, a spirit guide gains the ability to inflict great damage on the enemies of its beliefs. The spirit guide's natural attacks count as having the same alignment as the spirit guide's alignment element for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction and stopping regeneration. Additionally, the spirit guide can attempt to deliver a particularly powerful blow to a creature of the opposite alignment. Using this ability is a free action made as part of making an attack. If the target of the attack has an alignment that includes the opposite alignment element from the spirit guide's alignment element (chaos is opposed to law, evil is opposed to good), then the spirit guide gains a bonus on the attack roll equal to its Charisma modifier, and the attack deals an additional amount of damage equal to the spirit guide's class level. If the target of the attack is not of the opposing alignment, this ability has no effect. These benefits apply to only a single attack. At 9th level, the spirit guide can use this ability 3 times per day. At 12th level, and every 3 levels thereafter, it can use it one additional time per day.

Resist Aligned Spells (Su): By 15th level, a spirit guide's association with its chosen alignment element is so strong that it gains protection against the magic of opposing creatures. The spirit guide gains spell resistance equal to 11 + its class level. This spell resistance only applies to spells and spell-like abilities cast by creatures whose alignment includes the alignment element opposed to the spirit guide's alignment element (chaos is opposed to law, evil is opposed to good).

Spirit Infusion (Ex): At 20th level, a spirit guide becomes infused with the spirit of their associated alignment. If the spirit guide's chosen alignment element is chaos, it gains the entropic template. If the spirit guide's chosen alignment element is evil, it gains the fiendish template. If the spirit guide's chosen alignment element is good, it gains the celestial template. Finally, if the spirit guide's chosen alignment element is law, it gains the resolute template.

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Stalwart Sentinel

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A stalwart sentinel animal companion is a bulwark of defense and endurance, capable of standing toe-to-toe with even the greatest of threats. Not only do stalwart sentinels excel at surviving danger, they are able to resist pressure from much larger and more dangerous creatures. Though exceptional defensive creatures, stalwart sentinels are not as strong or as agile as other animal companions, and lack the brute offensive power of some other animal companions.

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

A stalwart sentinel's class skills are Climb (Str), Fly (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks Per Hit Dice: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Augmented Animal (Ex): A stalwart sentinel is gifted in defense and is a stalwart companion on the battlefield, despite lacking the strength or skills of other animal companions. A stalwart sentinel animal companion's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw, and skill progressions are all determined by its animal companion class. It is treated as an animal for the purposes of spells and effects that can only affect certain types of creatures.

Defensive Formation (Ex): A stalwart sentinel shares a special bond with its handler, that allows the two of them to better defend one another in combat. As long as the stalwart sentinel and the handler remain within 10 feet of each other, they each gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

Link (Ex): A handler can handle her animal companion as a free action, or push it as a move action, even if she doesn't have any ranks in the Handle Animal skill. The handler gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding an animal companion.

Slow and Sturdy (Ex): A stalwart sentinel is slower than other animals of its type, but is more sturdy and stable than others as well. A stalwart sentinel suffers a -10-foot penalty to all its movement speeds (to a minimum speed of 5 feet), but gains a +4 bonus to its CMD against bull rush, grapple, overrun and trip attacks.

Stalwart (Ex): A stalwart sentinel is tough and durable enough to withstand many attacks. At 3rd level, if the stalwart sentinel is subjected to an attack that normally allows a Fortitude or Will saving throw for a partial or lesser effect, it suffers no effect if it succeeds on that saving throw, instead.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Beginning at 6th level, a stalwart sentinel can react to danger before its senses would normally allow it to do so. It cannot be caught flat-footed, nor does it lose its Dex bonus to AC if the attacker is invisible. It still loses its Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

Table 1-7: Stalwart Sentinel Animal Companion Base Statistics

Class								Natural Armor	Dodge	Bonus	
	HD	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Skills	Feats	Bonus	Bonus		Special
ıst	2	+1	+3	+3	+3	2	1	+0	+0	0	Defensive formation, link, slow and sturdy
2nd	3	+2	+3	+3	+3	3	2	+0	+0	0	-
3rd	3	+2	+3	+3	+3	3	2	+2	+1	0	Stalwart
_4th	4	+3	+4	+4	+4	4	2	+2	+1	0	Ability score increase
5th	5	+3	+4	+4	+4	5	3	+2	+1	1	
6th	6	+4	+5	+5	+5	6	3	+4	+2	1	Uncanny dodge
7th	6	+4	+5	+5	+5	6	3	+4	+2	1	Sentinel's size
8th	7	+5	+5	+5	+5	7	4	+4	+2	1	-
9th	8	+6	+6	+6	+6	8	4	+6	+3	2	Ability score increase
10th	9	+6	+6	+6	+6	9	5	+6	+3	2	-
11th	9	+6	+6	+6	+6	9	5	+6	+3	2	
12th	10	+7	+7	+7	+7	10	5	+8	+4	2	
13th	11	+8	+7	+7	+7	11	6	+8	+4	2	
14th	12	+9	+8	+8	+8	12	6	+8	+4	2	Ability score increase
15th	12	+9	+8	+8	+8	12	6	+10	+5	3	Improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge
16th	13	+9	+8	+8	+8	13	7	+10	+5	3	
<u>17</u> th	14	+10	+9	+9	+9	14	7	+10	+5	3	-
18th	15	+11	+9	+9	+9	15	8	+12	+6	3	
19th	15	+11	+9	+9	+9	15	8	+12	+6	3	-
<u>20th</u>	16	+12	+10	+10	+10	16	8	+ <mark>12</mark>	+6	3	Ability score increase, giant

Sentinel's Size (Ex): A stalwart sentinel is able to throw its weight around in order to make the most of its bulk. At 7th level, the stalwart sentinel is considered to be one size category larger than it actually is for the purposes of determining its CMB and CMD, as well as for the purposes of any ability which specifically references a creature's size, such as grab or swallow whole (though it gains no other benefits or penalties of increased size). Additionally, when the stalwart sentinel is handled to use the maneuver trick, it gains a +2 bonus to its CMB. At 14th level, the stalwart sentinel is considered to be 2 size categories larger for the purposes of this ability, instead.

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Improved Evasion (Ex): A stalwart sentinel is able to ignore the effects of many traps and spells. At 15th level, when subjected to an attack that normally allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a stalwart sentinel takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and only half damage on a failed save. A helpless stalwart sentinel does not gain the benefit of improved evasion.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A stalwart sentinel of 15th level or higher can no longer be flanked.

This defense denies a rogue the ability to sneak attack the stalwart sentinel by flanking it, unless the attacker has at least four more rogue levels than the stalwart sentinel's handler's class level.

Giant (Ex): Over time, a stalwart sentinel reaches truly impressive size. At 20th level, the stalwart sentinel gains the giant creature template.



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New Feats

Animal Feats

The following feats are for animal companions, or in some cases, other animal creatures. While use of these feats is encouraged for a player character's animal companion, PCs themselves should not take these feats except in very unusual cases, and should consult with their GM before doing so. Though the following feats are intended for creatures of the animal type, they may be appropriate for certain magical beasts (such as awakened animals or fiendish animals).

Bloodhound

In addition to possessing superior tracking skills, you are able to get the attention of others and can aid them in following the trail.

Prerequisite: Scent Tracker.

Benefit: You automatically detect the presence of any scents that you could follow using Survival, provided that the Perception or Survival DC to notice that scent is no greater than 50. You detect the presence of the scent even if you were not actively searching for it. Detecting the presence of a scent in this way allows you to recognize the scent later, and compare it to scents that you have encountered previously or encounter later, but does not necessarily allow you to follow the scent's trail: doing so requires a Survival check, as normal. However, once you have detected the presence of a scent, you can clue in your handler as a standard action. Once your handler is clued in to a scent you have detected, he can use Survival to follow the tracks. He gains a +5 bonus on any checks made to do so, and you can use the aid another action to provide further assistance, even if you would not normally be able to.

Death Grip

You grip your victims with such tightness as to cause deadly lethal wounds with your effortless strength.

Prerequisites: Grip Tight, animal.

Benefit: Whenever you maintain a hold using your grab special attack, you deal the damage indicated for the attack that established the hold (as normal), and you may choose to conduct the grapple normally (even if you use the Grip Tight feat to maintain your hold as a move action). If you have the constrict special attack, you gain a +5 bonus on your CMB check to maintain the hold (resulting in a total penalty of only -5 on your check to maintain the grapple) and deal constrict damage as normal.

Dominant Leader

You are among the fiercest of your kind, able to lead other animals and convince them to follow you through sheer presence.

Prerequisites: 7 HD, Charisma 10 or canine (dog, hyena, wolf, etc.), animal.

Benefit: You can lead other animals and get them to follow you in a similar way to humans leading others. This ability functions similarly to the Leadership feat, in that it allows you to attract and make use of additional companions who obey you. However, unlike Leadership, this feat allows you to control only animals of the same type as you, or which are suitably close to being the same sort as you (for example, a

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wolf could attract a dire wolf follower), and you can maintain dominance over a number of Hit Dice worth of creatures equal to twice your Hit Dice, and no creature under your control in this way can have more than 1/3 your Hit Dice. In addition, you gain a single animal of your kind who becomes the pack beta. The pack beta is especially loyal to you, and does not count against the number of Hit Dice you can have in your pack. The pack beta gains an amount of number Hit Dice (and appropriate increases to its base attack bonus, base saves, increased skill points additional feats etc.) equal to the number of bonus Hit Dice gained by an animal companion (treat your druid level as being equal to your Hit Dice for this purpose). The pack beta does not gain any other benefits of being an animal companion.

In order to command a member of your pack to perform a specific action, you must make a pack dominance check. This works in a fashion similar to the Handle Animal skill, but you instead add your Hit Dice + your Charisma modifier + your Wisdom modifier to the d20 roll. All members of the pack are treated as knowing whatever tricks you know, in addition to their normal tricks.

Exceptional Swimmer

You are an excellent swimmer, more than capable of fording simple streams and able to move through the water at great speeds.

Prerequisites: Swim 5 or more ranks, animal.

Benefit: You can hold your breath for twice as long as you normally could. You never have to be pushed to enter water (unless you would need to be pushed for some other reason). Additionally, your natural attacks don't the normal penalties for attacking underwater, and you can take 10 on Swim checks made to move in the water even during stressful situations. If you have a swim speed, that speed is increased by 10 feet, and when you run using your swim speed, you may move 5 times your swim speed.

Ferocious Death Roll

You are capable of performing a deadly acrobatic maneuver against those in your grasp, rending their flesh and knocking them to the ground.

Prerequisites: Grab special attack, base attack bonus +1, animal.

Benefit: When you maintain a grapple, you may choose to make a special ferocious death roll instead of dealing damage as normal. If you do, you deal a number of points of damage equal to 1d6 per 2 Hit Dice you possess + 1-1/2 times your Strength modifier, and knock the target prone. If you have the death roll special attack, the damage dealt by this ability is increased to be equal to 1d8 per 2 Hit Dice you possess + 1-1/2 times your Strength modifier.

Grip Tight

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Once you have your prey in your grasp, you never let go, even as you pursue other activities.

Prerequisites: Grab special attack, animal.

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Benefit: Whenever you use your grab special attack to hold a creature rather than conduct the grapple normally, you make your CMB checks to maintain the grapple at only a -10 penalty, rather than a -20 penalty, and may attempt to maintain the hold as a move action, rather than a standard

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action. If you do, you cannot choose to begin conducting the grapple normally that round.

Mighty Blow

Though you have only one natural means of defending yourself, your focus on that ability allows you to make exceptionally powerful attacks with it.

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus (natural attack), animal, does not possess more than 1 natural attack.

Benefit: Whenever you make an attack with your natural attack, you add 3 times your Strength modifier to the damage roll instead of 1-1/2 times your Strength modifier. Additionally, the critical multiplier of that natural attack is increased by 1.

Scent Tracker

You are an expert at finding and following scent trails, able to do so long after most would give up.

Prerequisites: Animal, scent special quality.

Benefit: When you use Survival to follow tracks using the scent special quality, the DC for a cold trail increases only by +1 for each hour that the trail is cold, and you gain a +3 bonus on all Survival checks made to follow tracks using the scent special quality. This bonus increases to +6 if you have 10 or more ranks in Survival.

Tripping Charge

When you rush a foe, you make a swift assault, dealing out lethal blows as you drag your foe to the ground. **Prerequisites:** Animal, pounce or trip special attack **Benefit:** Whenever you make a charge special attack and hit with all of your natural attacks as part of that charge attack, you may choose to drag the target to the ground. If you do, the target suffers an additional 1d6 points of damage and both you and the target are knocked prone.

Truly Loyal

You love your master and happily comply with commands without any hassle.

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Prerequisite: Animal companion.

Benefit: Whenever you are handled or asked to perform a trick, the Handle Animal check automatically succeeds, regardless of the result of the roll. However, if the result of the check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, you gain a +1 morale bonus on any attack roll or combat maneuver roll made as part of that command or trick. If the command or trick requires a skill check, you gain a +2 competence bonus on that skill check. For every 5 points beyond 5 that the result of the Handle Animal check exceeds the DC, the morale bonuses increase by +1, and the competence bonuses increase by +2 (to a maximum of +5 and +10, respectively).

General Feats

The following feats are intended for characters that have an animal companion and want to get the most out of using their companion for combat or utility.

Assault Command

You know how to guide your animal companion's attacks, allowing it to deliver more accurate and effective blows. **Prerequisites:** Handle Animal 5 or more ranks, ability to gain an animal companion.

Benefit: When you use the Handle Animal skill to command your animal companion to use the attack trick, you may attempt to issue an assault command. This increases the Handle Animal DC by 5, but if the check is successful, your animal companion gains a +2 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls against the target it was ordered to attack. If the result of the check was also equal to or greater than the target's AC, the bonus to damage increases by an additional +2. These benefits last for 1 minute, or until the first time the animal companion damages the target of the attack trick, whichever comes first.

Empathic Conversation

Through your intense empathic understanding and countless hours of practice, you can communicate somewhat effectively with your animal companion.

Prerequisites: Ability to gain an animal companion, wild empathy.

Benefit: You can make a wild empathy check with your animal companion in order to converse with it in a rudimentary fashion. In order to converse with your animal companion in this way, you must succeed on a wild empathy check with a DC depending on the complexity of the thought of being conveyed. If the concept is only a basic one (such as, "I smell something fishy," or, "Check it out") the DC is 15. If the information to be conveyed is more complex (for example, "Be careful, monsters ahead," or, "Don't step on the black tiles"), the DC is 20. If the information to be conveyed is very complex (such as, "Go to the minister's room and retrieve his gloves from the bedside table") the DC is 25. For extremely complex communication, the DC varies, at the GM's discretion, and may not be possible.

Great Handler

You are so practiced in handling your animal companion that you can have it perform tasks without difficulty. **Prerequisite:** Ability to gain an animal companion. **Benefit:** If your animal companion has the link special ability, you may choose to handle that animal as a swift action or push it as a standard action. If you do, you may take 10 on the Handle Animal skill check (even while in combat or in other stressful situations), and you may use the Handle Animal skill even if you do not have any ranks in it.

Linked Rider

You can use your link with your animal companion in order to perform feats of mounted prowess with exceptional ease and supernatural practice.

Prerequisite: Ability to gain an animal companion. **Benefit:** You gain a+4 bonus on Ride checks while mounted on your animal companion and need less time to complete Ride checks. So long as you are mounted on your animal companion, any Ride check requiring a move action may be performed as a swift action, and any Ride requiring a standard action may be performed as a move action.

Magic Channel

You can use your close bond with your animal companion not just to share spells, but to actually transfer magical effects from yourself to your companion.

Prerequisite: Ability to gain an animal companion. **Benefit:** Whenever you are affected by a spell with a duration of greater than instantaneous (including spell effects generated from spell-like abilities and magic items such as potions) which still has a remaining duration, you may spend a standard action to transfer the remaining duration of that effect to your animal companion. If you do, the spell effect stops affecting you, and instead affects your animal companion for the remainder of the duration. This transfer is one way; your animal companion cannot transfer the spell effect back to you.

Teamwork Feats

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Animal companions often work together with their handlers in order to accomplish their goals. The following teamwork feats are designed with this relationship in mind and are meant to be taken by both the player character and his animal companion. If only one of the pair takes the feat, it has no effect. For the purposes of the feats below, "ally" refers to the other member of the handler/animal companion pair.

Each of these feats has two different sets of prerequisites. The first, listed as Prerequisites, is for the animal companion's handler, and lists the prerequisites that he must meet in order to take the feat. The second, listed as Animal Companion Prerequisites, lists the prerequisites required for the animal companion to take the feat. These prerequisites are not interchangeable: a character or animal companion can only take the feat if he meets the prerequisite that applies to him.

As One [Teamwork]

You act in perfect concert as mount and rider, each providing additional strength to the other when you act in unison. **Prerequisites:** Ride 1 rank, ability to gain an animal companion.

Animal Companion Prerequisites: None. Benefit: When your animal companion serves as your mount, it gains a +10-foot bonus to all its movement speeds and ignores the weight of you and your gear when determining its weight carried. While mounted on your animal companion, you may take 10 on all Ride checks, even while in stressful situations, and you gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls (this is in addition to the +1 attack bonus on melee attacks for having higher ground, if applicable). Additionally, both you and your animal companion gain a +2 dodge bonus against attacks of opportunity caused by movement while you are mounted on your animal companion. Finally, while mounted on your animal companion, both you and your animal companion are treated as one size category smaller for the purposes of what spaces you can squeeze into.

Evisceration Strike [Critical, Teamwork]

When attacking the same foe, you and your ally rip them to shreds.

Prerequisites: Critical Focus, ability to gain an animal companion.

Animal Companion Prerequisite: Critical Focus. Benefit: If both you and your ally confirm a critical hit against a single target in the same round, that target becomes staggered for 1d4 rounds and gains 3d6 points of bleed damage.

Falcon Strike [Teamwork]

You and your ally attack your targets in concert, with one of you winging ahead to strike the opponent's eyes and face while the other follows through with a punishing blow to the body. **Prerequisites:** Coordinated Charge, ability to gain an animal companion.

Animal Companion Prerequisites: Coordinated Charge, fly speed.

Benefit: Whenever you use the coordinated charge teamwork feat to charge a creature your ally has charged, if the ally's charge attack was successful, you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls against the target on your charge attack that round.

Harrowing Team [Teamwork]

While serving as a mounted unit, you and your ally work together to bamboozle and distract your foes. **Prerequisites:** Ride 1 rank, ability to gain an animal companion, base attack bonus +1.

Animal Companion Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1. Benefit: While you are mounted upon your ally (or your ally is mounted upon you), both you and your ally are considered to be flanking any creatures that you both threaten.

Hunting Buddy [Teamwork]

You and your ally are inseparable when it comes to matters of hunting, both for food and shelter and for more specific quarry.

Prerequisites: Survival 1 rank, ability to gain an animal companion.

Animal Companion Prerequisites: Survival 1 rank or scent special ability

Benefit: You and your ally gain a +2 bonus on Survival
checks. Additionally, whenever you make a Perception check
to find tracks or a Survival check to follow the same set of
tracks, each of you uses the highest roll between the two of
you and then apply your individual modifiers to the check.
Finally, whenever you and your ally are both using Survival to
follow the same set of tracks, use the higher of your and your
ally's base speeds when determining how fast you can move
while following the tracks (this does not allow you to move
faster than your base speed).

Improved Man's Best Friend [Teamwork]

The special bond between man and beast allows you to avoid dangers which could threaten to cut your partnership short. **Prerequisites:** Great Fortitude, or Iron Will, or Lightning Reflexes, and Man's Best Friend,

Animal Companion Prerequisites: Man's Best Friend, Truly Loyal.

Benefit: As long as you are within 10 feet of your ally, if you and your ally are subject to the same saving throw (such as because you are both within the area of the same *fireball* spell, or were both targeted by *mass hold monster*), if you fail your saving throw but your ally succeeds, you may immediately reroll that saving throw with a +2 bonus. You must take the second result, even if it's worse.

Man's Best Friend [Teamwork]

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You share a special bond between animal companion and master which allows you to draw on one another for support in times of crisis.

Benefit: When using the aid another action, you and your ally grant one another an additional +2 bonus to AC, attack rolls, or skill checks, and you may use the aid another action to aid your ally in Perception, Sense Motive or Stealth Checks, even if you would not otherwise be able to.

Open Form [Teamwork]

Whenever you strike your foes with exceptional power, you leave them open for your ally to make a lethal blow. **Prerequisites:** Improved Critical, ability to gain an animal companion.

Animal Companion Prerequisites: Critical Focus. Benefit: Whenever you confirm a critical hit against a creature, for the next round your ally treats its critical threat range as though it were 2 higher than it actually is when making attacks against the same target. Apply this effect after any other effect which modifies the critical threat range of your ally's weapon, such as the improved critical feat or a *keen* weapon.

Running With the Pack [Teamwork]

You and your ally feed off each other's energy, pushing each other to higher speeds and greater attacks.

Prerequisite: Ability to gain an animal companion. **Animal Companion Prerequisites:** Base land speed of 40 feet or higher.

Benefit: Whenever your ally moves at least 40 feet, you gain a +10-foot bonus to your movement speed for 1 round. Additionally, if you move at least 40 feet as part of a charge attack, and your ally makes an attack against that same target as part of a charge action during the same round, your ally gains a +1 bonus to the attack roll made as part of that charge. You may only gain the benefits of this feat if you were within 40 feet of your ally at the beginning of the round.

Wing Down [Teamwork]

Through perfect coordination, the two of you are experts at knocking your foes from the air and then charging them down. **Prerequisites:** Deadly Aim, Improved Precise Shot, ability to gain an animal companion.

Animal Companion Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6. Benefit: As a full-round action, you may make a single attack with a ranged weapon against a creature which is currently flying. If the attack is successful, you deal damage as normal and the target must succeed on a Reflex save (DC equal to the damage dealt) or fall 20 feet straight down. If the target is still above the ground after this attack, he may continue to fly as normal; otherwise, he suffers 2d6 points of fall damage, and your ally may move up to its speed and attack the target as an immediate action.

New Spells

The following spells are presented in alphabetical order.

ANIMAL MELDING

School transmutation; Level druid 4 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range touch Target your animal companion Duration 1 round/level (D)

You meld your form with your animal companion, transferring not just your soul but your body into your animal companion. This spell functions similarly to the spell *magic jar*, except that no vessel is required and your body moves into your animal companion. Additionally, while melded in this fashion, the host (your animal companion) gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Dexterity, and whenever it takes damage, you may choose whether that damage is dealt to you or to your animal companion (you cannot split the damage from a single source).

ANIMAL VISION

School divination; Level cleric 1, druid 1, ranger 1, shaman 1, sorcerer/wizard 1, witch 1 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range touch Target your animal companion Duration 1 hour/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You instill some of yourself into your animal companion's mind, allowing you to share sensory information. You and your animal companion or familiar each gain each other's special senses (low-light vision, darkvision, scent, etc.) for the spell's duration. Additionally, as long as you remain within 1 mile of each other, as a swift action you can transfer your consciousness to your animal companion's senses, allowing you to see and hear everything it does. You are blind and deaf to your own surroundings and considered helpless while your consciousness is transferred in this way. You can transfer your sensory awareness back to yourself as a swift action, though you must wait at least 1 round after you transfer it to your animal companion to do so.

BEAST RAGE

School conjuration (healing); Level bard 4, bloodrager 4, druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 4, summoner 4, witch 4 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range personal Target you Duration 1 minute/level

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You are filled with the boiling rage of a fearsome beast. You gain a +4 morale bonus to Strength and deal an additional 1d6 points of damage with natural attacks and unarmed strikes. While under the effect of this spell, you are driven by a mad rage which renders you incapable of casting spells or performing actions which require concentration. If you cast this spell on your animal companion, eidolon, or familiar using the share spells ability, the morale bonus to Strength increases to +8.

BEAST'S BREATH

School evocation [fire, poison]; Level druid 8, sorcerer/ wizard 8 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range touch Area 30-ft. cone Duration instantaneous Saving Throw Reflex partial; Spell Resistance yes

You breathe a horrible, super-heated smog which can poison creatures and burn them simultaneously. All creatures in the area suffer 1d6 points of fire damage per caster level (max 25d6) and must succeed on a Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 points of Constitution damage. You may choose to have this spell originate from your animal companion or familiar, as long as it is within 30 feet of you. If you do, the saving throw DC is equal to 10 + 1/2 the animal companion or familiar's Hit Dice + the animal companion or familiar's Constitution modifier.

CURE COMPANION

School conjuration (healing); Level druid 1, ranger 1, paladin

Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level) Target your animal companion Duration instantaneous Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You transfer magical healing energies to your animal companion in order to heal its wounds. This restores a number of hit points to your animal companion equal to 2d6 + your caster level (to a maximum of +10 at 10th level).

ENHANCE SPEED

School transmutation; Level druid 2, paladin 2, ranger 2 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level) Target your animal companion Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Fortitude negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You empower your animal companion's muscles, making it faster and more reflexive. This translates to comenadarelen melephinat benerad der, rohimen undbije



increasing all of your animal companion's movement speeds by 10 feet per 3 caster levels (to a maximum of +40 feet at 12th level). Additionally, the increased reflexes grant your animal companion a +4 dodge bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity caused by movement, and a +2 bonus on Reflex saves.

ENSOUL COMPANION

School transmutation; Level druid 7 Casting Time 1 minute Components V, S, DF Range touch Target your animal companion Duration 1 day/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance no

This spell grants your animal companion temporary sentience. The affected creature's Intelligence score temporarily increases to an amount equal to 2d6+6. This does not cause it to gain additional skill ranks, but it does learn all languages that you can speak, and is able to speak them as well. This spell does not affect your animal companion's ability to serve as your animal companion.

LINKED LIGHTNING SHIELD

School evocation [electricity]; Level druid 3 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range personal and touch; see text Target you and your animal companion; see text Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

Through your magical bond, you can surround yourself and your animal companion with a barrier of electric energy. As long as you and your animal companion are within touch range of each other (within either of your reach), you are both surrounded by a barrier of lightning which causes your natural attacks and unarmed strikes to deal an additional 1d8 points of electricity damage. This additionally deals 1d8 points of damage to any creature that damages you or your animal companion with a natural attack, unarmed strike, or melee weapon.

MIGHTY COMPANION

School transmutation; Level druid 9 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range touch Target your animal companion Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Fortitude negates (harmless); Spell Resistance no

Your animal companion becomes unstoppable. For the duration of the spell, your animal companion is immune to physical damage, effectively granting it an unlimited amount of damage reduction which cannot be overcome by any means. This has no effect on other forms of damage, such as acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic damage, damage from positive or negative energy, and so on.

PRIMAL POWER

School abjuration; Level druid 3 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range personal Target you Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You enhance your link with your animal companion, allowing you to affect it with spells remotely, which would normally require physical contact. As long as your animal companion remains within 30 feet of you, you treat any spell you cast that targets your animal companion as though it had a range of 30 feet, allowing you to cast spells with a range of touch from up to 30 feet away. This also works in conjunction with the share spells ability, allowing you to affect your animal companion with spells that have a range of personal from up to 30 feet away.

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SIPHON SPELLS

School abjuration; Level druid 2, paladin 2, ranger 2 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level) Target your animal companion Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You enhance the link between yourself and your animal companion, allowing you to transfer spells from your animal companion to yourself. For the duration of the spell, whenever your animal companion would be affected by a spell that does not affect any other creatures, as an immediate action, you may choose to have that spell affect you instead. You must be within 30 feet of your animal companion to use this ability. A spell transferred to you in this way continues to affect you for its full duration, even if that would be longer than the duration of *siphon spells*. If the spell requires a saving throw, you make the save at your own bonus. If you are not a valid target for a spell transferred in this way, it is still transferred from your animal companion, but has no effect on you.

SPLIT COMPANION

School illusion (shadow) [shadow]; Level druid 6 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level) Target your animal companion Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You infuse your animal companion with shadow stuff and then split it into two forms. Your animal companion splits into two shadow forms, each of which is only partially real. How real each of the two shadow forms is is determined by you when the spell is cast. While each half can be up to 90% real (though not less than 10% real), when added together, the percentages must equal 100%, in 10% increments (so one could be 30% real and the other 70% real, both could be 50% real, one could be 10% real and the other 90% real, and so on).

Each shadow form has a number of hit points correlating to how real it is, with the total number of hit points between the two shadow forms adding up to the total number of hit points your animal companion had when split companion was cast (for example, if you animal companion had 50 hit points, then if one shadow form was 30% real it would have 15 hit points, while the other shadow form that was 70% real would have 35 hit points). At the end of the spell's duration, the shadow form with the fewest remaining hit points melds into the other shadow form (if they both have the same number of hit points, you choose which melds into which). The remaining shadow form becomes 100% real, with hit points equal to half the number of total remaining hit points from both shadow forms, rounded down (for example, if one shadow form has 44 hit points and the other has 30, the animal companion would have 37 hit points when it recombines at the end of the spell's duration).

WARD COMPANION

School abjuration; Level druid 3, paladin 3 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range touch Target your animal companion Duration 10 minutes/level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

You surround your animal companion with an intangible field of energy which protects it from attacks and spells. This defensive bond grants your animal companion an enhancement bonus to its natural armor equal to 1/4 your caster level (rounded down, minimum 1). Additionally, whenever your animal companion makes a saving throw against a spell or spell-like ability, it may use its own bonus or your bonus, whichever is higher.

WILD LIGHTNING

School evocation; Level druid 5 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range personal Target you Duration 1 round/level

You fill yourself with wild and energetic lightning, which you can unleash at will. As a standard action, you can unleash a 6o-foot line of lightning that deals 1d6 points of damage per 2 caster levels; a successful Reflex save halves this damage. Lightning created by this spell deals no damage to your animal companion.

WILD WRATH

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School transmutation; Level druid 5 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range touch Target your animal companion Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Fortitude negates (harmless); Spell Resistance no

You greatly empower your animal companion, making it a fierce but uncontrollable engine of destruction. The animal companion gains a +8 bonus to its Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores, a +4 dodge bonus to AC, and treats its attack bonus as being equal to your caster level. While under the effects of this spell, however, your animal companion cannot control its actions, and must do its best to attack the nearest living creature. Your animal companion never attacks you because of this effect. You can make a Handle Animal check to push your animal companion in order to prevent it from attacking a specific creature for 1 round.

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Roleplaying an Animal Companion

An animal companion is a significant aspect of the character it belongs to, typically granting that character access to additional offensive or defensive support, or serving as a superior mount. Animal companions come in a lot of different shapes and sizes, from the small and underwhelming to the ferocious and mighty. With unique abilities, powers, and perhaps even its own magic items, an animal companion is very much a character in its own right. Given that animal companions are so important, taking the time to invest some thought and energy into them can have a profound effect on your game.

Roleplaying an animal companion offers unique challenges to the roleplayer, far beyond that of most other characters. Because roleplaying an animal companion well is so challenging, all too often animal companions become just another set of moves and attacks in combat, a series of numbers which comprise its stats, or even just a lump of hit points. Some animal companions even get thrown entirely by the wayside, exiled from the dangers of combat to keep it safe, only for the character to spend the rest of the game ignoring the fact that she has an animal companion. Not to worry, though: this book is here to help. While other parts of this guide look to encourage players to use their animal companions actively in combat, this section seeks to address roleplaying concerns to bring animal companions to life and engage them more fully in the game outside of combat. In this section, we highlight several key roleplaying challenges facing animal companions and provide tips for addressing them, from out of game complications to the small details that really make your animal companion more than a stat block.

Major Pitfalls

Believe it or not, one of the greatest challenges facing animal companion roleplayers is determining exactly whose responsibility it is to roleplay the animal companion in the first place. Many players want to retain control over their animal companion both in combat and out, treating it as an extension of their character. By the same token, many GMs will want to treat the animal companion as a type of special NPC whose actions are governed by its own will, or, more practically, by the GM. This can highlight the animal companion as a separate character, which the PC has to interact with in order to get it to do what she wants. Practically speaking, players and GMs are both busy handling all manner of other activities, and one might just as easily choose to cast off the active control of the companion to the other, or both might neglect the animal companion entirely, especially if it's unclear who should be doing the roleplaying.

The main key to addressing this situation is communication between the player and GM. The worst thing one could do in this situation is let the issue get confused, as that will inevitably lead to the animal companion getting ignored and never getting any real "screen time," so to speak. Usually, this problem can be resolved with a simple conversation, and everyone can move on happily.

When talking with your GM or with your player, there are a few things to keep in mind in order to assure that the animal companion is being roleplayed in the way that is fairest to everyone. First and foremost, it should be established how important it will be to have a fleshed-out animal companion who is roleplayed heavily. The player might be more invested in the animal companion than his character, or the GM might leap at the opportunity to inject some flavor into the party.

Remember that roleplaying this extra character can be a lot of work, and in all likelihood will prove time consuming and may distract from other things going on. One solution to keep this from getting out of hand is to split who controls the animal companion in combat and who roleplays it outside of combat. Of course, this can lead to some conflict if either the player or GM dislikes how the other handles his share, so it is best reserved for players and GMs who know each other well. Another unique solution is to have one player exclusively handle the roleplaying for all the other players' animal companions, familiars, cohorts and the like. This is a little outside of the box, but offers a unique and interesting roleplaying opportunity to challenge experienced players, and helps bring a much higher level of attention to these side characters than they might otherwise receive.

Another important pitfall to be aware of is time management and ensuring that the animal companion gets roleplayed at all. Many GMs who end up taking on the role of animal companion might be too busy running every other NPC to run the animal companion as much as the player would like. By the same token, many players might find that by roleplaying their animal companion, it takes time away from roleplaying their own character, and may find themselves sacrificing the animal companion's time and energy to glorify their main character. If that sounds like you, don't worry: with animal companions, a little can go a long way. As long as the animal companion contributes regularly, it need not take up a lot of time and focus. A simple shuffle here and there, a whine when it's distressed, or a remark about its eating habits goes a long way towards bringing the animal companion to life without significantly affecting pace of play or putting undue focus on one character while others are ignored.

The other main challenge facing animal companion roleplaying, apart from decisions about who's in control and finding the time to slip in some animal companion action, is that animal companions have difficulty expressing themselves in a way that people might consider meaningful. We will address this issue more fully in the following sections, but the main thing to remember is that, as with real animal, actions speak as loud as words, and creative descriptions can make a character limited to barks and squawks feel like one of the gang.

Description and Personality

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Once you've figured out who's going to roleplay the animal companion and established a willingness to commit to roleplaying it, one is faced with the challenge of... well, actually roleplaying an animal companion. Too often, side characters like animal companions end up described as a name and a series of combat figures. By giving your animal companion a better description than, "it's a wolf," you can instantly make a class feature into a real character your fellow players can think about and invest in. Just like echnenadarden meder henerad der, rohmen mudbige



with any other character, details large and small separate one animal companion from another of its type. You can be as in depth or as brief as you like here; remember that character descriptions rarely get repeated, and as such, pace of play issues are minimal when it comes to long-winded explanations. A good rule of thumb would be to describe your animal companion in *almost as much detail* as you describe your actual character. If that leaves you with, "it's a wolf," you might think of investing more details for both your PC and your animal companion!

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Remember that physical descriptions include more than just looks, and that while, "an older wolf with a grizzled grey hide and a large chink missing from its left ear," is certainly an improvement on, "it's a wolf," that's not all there is to that character. Details about how it moves or what it sounds like really make it pop, and can also help you in the second important step of creating a fleshed-out animal companion: establishing a personality. For example, that same grizzled wolf might still move with great exuberance despite an advanced age, or have an unusually croaky howl. Your details don't need to be exotic: not everything needs to be the scion of otherworldly forces with fur of pure gold and eyes like fire to be interesting. Remember that a wolf with a brown spot on its face is just as unique as one that's pure white and has glowing red eyes. That said, the goal is to have fun and be entertaining, and if that means your animal companion should appear quasi-magical, then you should go for it and make the most out of it.

Apart from a physical description, your animal companion needs a personality. A consistent personality will not only make your animal companion feel more like a real character, but will also help you to roleplay it in a fun and realistic manner. The key with establishing your animal companion's personality is not simply picking the most exotic or most impressive set of instinctual traits; instead, we recommend picking something that you will find fun to roleplay week after week, or which will provide you with a challenge that you will find fulfilling. and a control o

An animal companion which is humorously lazy, or quick to anger, or obsessed with food, or easily excited will provide you with constant ideas about when and how to roleplay your animal companion, and should make the whole process simple and accessible. When it comes to picking a personality for your animal companion, we recommend keeping it simple, and using some elements from its general description to reinforce that personality. For example, a wolf that is twitchy and easily excitable might also be cowardly and suspicious, or defensive, or happy, and those attributes lend weight to its personality. Once you've established your animal companion's description and personality, you can usually tell when it's time for some animal companion roleplaying action; for example, a twitchy and cowardly wolf who's gone deaf in one ear might not react to big noises, but whenever an impressive monster shows up, you could describe how it skitters behind you whimpering, which will make it all the more rewarding when you reassure your companion and then use Handle Animal to convince it to go for the beast's throat.

Expressing an Animal Companion

For the most part, animal companions cannot talk, which might make it seem that it would be tricky to roleplay with them effectively. After all, many of the situations in which roleplaying is the chief activity are social situations which call for saying the right thing. But just because your animal companion can't talk doesn't mean it can't contribute to the excitement of any situation. Expressing your animal companion is the most important thing you can do to inject fun and flavor into your animal companion.

It's all well and good to say that your animal companion is fiercely defensive, but it's when the chips are down and you express that defensiveness that the idea is realized. Your animal companion's overall personality and the environment around it should determine when your animal companion expresses itself in a way that is meaningful enough to tell the whole group about. A bear which is fundamentally lazy isn't that remarkable all the time, but when there's danger and the bear needs to get out of there, maybe it yawns and strides forward leisurely when you desperately call out to it. Similarly, if a badger is highly protective of its handler and constantly keeps close to her, this isn't significant enough to constantly talk about, but perhaps it coils reflexively around the handler's feet when confronted by even friendly strangers, hissing at the newcomers. By explaining the creature's actions, even briefly, in reaction to the right stimulation, your animal companion can say as much as or more than a speaking cohort might.

Even simple cries and mundane movements, if welltimed, will turn your animal companion from something people forget about (except when it's giving them flanking) to something they think of as part of the team. A good way to accomplish this quickly is to make sure the animal companion has some sort of relationship with characters other than your PC. Perhaps the tiger has taken a shining to party's wizard and nuzzles him from time to time in the hopes of being petted; perhaps the riding dog has developed something of a rivalry with the paladin's pegasus mount. Or maybe the animal companion doesn't like one of the other characters and hisses or growls when he or she is near, or moves to keep your PC away from the unwanted influence.

While party interaction is the most important, remember the animal companion lives in the same world as the rest of the party and can interact with all the same people they meet and all the same things they encounter. As far as keeping the game fun for all players, it is often a safer choice to have an animal companion that tends to be friendly to others, as an animal companion that is always a liability and creates trouble for the party can quickly become frustrating. However, if you keep it entertaining and play up the relationship between the animal companion and the handler, you can still keep it fun for the rest of the group. Perhaps the handler constantly complains about her selfish monitor lizard, but she secretly loves it, or perhaps she constantly dotes on her spoiled wolverine, who is incredibly hostile to everyone else. Remember that the point is for everyone to have a good time!

If all else fails, look for ways in which your character and your animal companion are likely to interact. While this may feel like roleplaying with yourself (especially if you are

the one handling your animal companion's roleplaying), it nonetheless serves as an easy and yet also valuable source of insight into not just the animal companion, but also the character and the relationship between the two (which is a separate thing from both of them individually). While you certainly don't want to hog the spotlight at the table with interactions between your two characters, a quick peek in at how your character and his animal companion interact can prove insightful and entertaining to other players, and may also present opportunities for them to get involved. Does your character feed his animal companion, or does the animal companion hunt for food? What does it eat? Is it a picky eater? Does it whine for seconds, or does it leave its leftovers in front of your character's tent? How often does your character groom or bathe the animal companion? Does he play games with it? The answers to these questions should quickly provide you with lots of inspiration to bring both characters to life.

Animal Companion-Driven Encounters

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Finally, even if you do everything right, sometimes the amazing things that are going on in the rest of the game will keep your animal companion from having the chance to truly shine. When this happens, it may be time to have an encounter or adventure which, at least some small way, puts the focus back on the animal companion. This might be something combat-related, such as the animal companion chasing a squirrel into the behir's lair, forcing the PCs, who had been carefully planning their assault on the beast, to act sooner than they wanted. It might be something which has nothing to do with combat, but which reminds the PCs not only that the animal companion exists, but that they are living in a world which consists of more than just killing monsters for gold. For example, the riding dog animal companion could have puppies, forcing the PCs to deal with the sudden influx of a litter of helpless, adorable creatures. Or the animal companion might be kidnapped and held by evildoers who demand the PCs do some task or another, lest they choose to kill it off.

Obviously, this sort of thing is more in the GM's hands than the player's (and we certainly don't recommend that you have your animal companion deliberately ruin your party's carefully-planned assault or grind the game to a halt by announcing that your animal companion's water just broke—unless your party happens to be receptive to the idea), but, as with any other concerns you have about the way the game is going, you should feel free to talk to your GM if you would like to find a way to put a little focus on your animal companion, and, most likely, she will be happy to accommodate, at least once in a while.

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Dance on the Wild Side!

Animal companions. They're practically characters in their own right, and a surprisingly large number of classes have access to them, but somehow, through a mix of being difficult to roleplay and having much less options for customization, they always seem to wind up forgotten in the background. Don't let this fate happen to your animal companion!

This book presents a variety of new options for customizing animal companions and making them more relevant in your game. First, the book presents several new classes specifically for animal companions, allowing you to choose what type of animal companion you want: from the ferocious fearsome beast, to the implacable stalwart sentinel. Those looking for a less combat—inclined animal companion might look to the sage counselor, which responds particularly well to its handler's magic, or the sly varmint, which allows the animal companion to serve the utility role of a rogue, to a lesser extent. The noble steed is perfect for paladins and cavaliers, and the spirit guide reinforces a cleric or inquisitor's zeal and moral views.

Beyond this, there are a wide variety of new feats and spells that feature animal companions, including several feats made specifically for animals, and a collection of teamwork feats for animal companions and their handlers, helping the two to fight in sync. Finally, a brief section discusses some of the common pitfalls and difficulties of roleplaying an animal companion, and some ways to combat them.

Your animal companion deserves to be just as special and customized as the character that it comes with. Don't just settle for the defaults. Dick up this book, and never look at animal companions the same way again.

ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE