

Shape-shifters in the Old World, notably werewolves

Throughout the Old World men and women have long lived in fear of shape-shifters or garou, those that can take on some of the attributes or even the full shape of another animal. In the Empire this is most commonly the wolf, whereupon these garou are known as werewolves. Further north, in Norsca and certainly Kislev tales of were-bears, were-cats and even were-birds (ravens) are not unheard.

Primal fear

Although the names vary from one region to another, the dread remains universal:

- Empire: werwolf, shapshifters, lupenir
- Norsca: ulfwerener, werwulf, bersekers
- Kislev: oborotyen
- Brettonia: lapou, garou
- Estalia: hombre lupo
- Tilea: licanthropo, uomo lupo
- Ungol: kurtadam



Initiation

Although there are several ways of becoming a garou, most are rare and some quite difficult. Here are the most common sources:

1. Birthright – most children of one or more parents with the condition inherit it but even then it only seems to manifest itself after puberty.
2. Tainted - any wound inflicted by a garou can corrupt its victim through “wolf redness”. It is said that a scratch is unlikely to infect but that a bite is often fatal, so an *Infected Wounds* test, i.e.
 - a. **Heavy Wound** = **Easy (+20) Toughness** test
 - b. **Severe Wound** = **Simple (+10) Toughness** test
 - c. **Critical Wound** = **Standard (-) Toughness** test
3. Cursed – it seems that certain wizards, priests or even gods can inflict this curse on their victims.
4. Apprenticed – it seems that this condition can be studied and even learnt. Several techniques have been evoked from the removal of clothing and donning of a wolfskin pelt, to the body being rubbed with a magic salve, as well as drinking rainwater from the footprint of the target animal or from enchanted streams, even initiation by draining a cup of special beer and repeating a set formula:

Certain sorcerers, who having annoyed their bodies with an ointment which they make by the instinct of the devil, and putting on a certain enchanted girdle, does not only unto the view of others seem as wolves, but to their own thinking have both the shape and nature of wolves, so long as they wear the said girdle. And they do dispose themselves as very wolves, in worrying and killing, and most of humane creatures.

Gift or curse?

Some might argue that this is a matter of perspective but most agree that it boils down to the garou’s ability to control the Urge and, to a lesser extent, local society’s interpretation of this circumstance. The capacity to control the Urge seems to be heavily dependent on the source. Indeed it seems that those who became garou through no fault of their own are somehow less able to control their primal urges than those who learnt how to shift. In terms of mechanics in WFRP, this is best expressed as 2 separate skills:

- *Lycanthropy*: believed by physicians to be a condition, probably a disease, though maybe a corruption, by which victims suffer the following symptoms:
 - Impulsive: **when the garou is exposed to 1 or more of the influences (see below), they must test their WillPower**. A pass indicates they control their primal Urge. If not, they Change...
 - Unbridled: the garou can Change into any of the forms (see below)
- *Shape-shifter*: a person that has learnt the ability to shift their human body into the form of an animal:
 - Controlled: **whenever the garou is exposed to 1 or more of the influences they must roll a Very Easy (+30) WP test**. A pass means they resist their primal Urge. Fail and they Change...
 - Limited: the garou can only Change into the form with which they’re familiar (usually Lupus)

So, in most cases the cause was unwelcomed and society is terrified of these half-creatures, leading to the general opinion that lycanthropy is a terrible affliction. That said, the rare few that sought to shape-change and/or can control their urges consider it a gift and, in some cases, a divine blessing.

Influences

Regardless of the source of the lycanthropy, all garou are susceptible to the following stimuli. So whenever they encounter them, they must pass a **WP** test to determine whether they succumb to the Urge or not. Worse still, these stimuli have been known to combine...

Stimuli	Garou's chances of resisting the Urge
Baying livestock	Very Easy (+30) WP
<u>Sight</u> of fresh blood	Easy (+20) WP
<u>Smell</u> of fresh blood	Simple (+10) WP
Acute fear, e.g. anxiety, despair	Standard (-) WP
Acute anger, e.g. insulted, resentment	Tricky (-10) WP
Acute hatred, e.g. humiliated, jealousy	Challenging (-20) WP
Acute trauma, e.g. critical	Hard (-30) WP
Frenzied	Very Hard (-40) WP
Moon, moons & moonlight	Varies (see below)

Lunacy

For reasons unknown, the moons of the Old World exert a terrible influence over the garou:

- Mannslied: a regular moon so the lunar phase (each lasts 3 days) can be calculated using [the Calendars of the Empire](#):
 - Full moon (○) = **+10 WP**
 - Gibbous moon (◐) = **+5 WP**
 - Quarter moon (◑) = no influence
 - Crescent moon (☾) = **-5 WP**
 - New moon (●) = **-10 WP**
- Morrslied: being the chaotic moon:
 - Its phases are totally unpredictable (GM's discretion) with the exception of 2 nights per year when it consistently appears as a full moon; Hexensnacht (1st night of the year) and Geheimnisnacht (1 month after the Summer Solstice).
 - Its influence is far stronger, i.e. all modifiers for Mannslied are doubled!
- OPTIONAL: on most nights, the moon is cloudy, thereby occluding the moonlight. But occasionally (30%) the moonlight is direct and therefore savagely powerful, i.e. double these modifiers!



The Urge

Whenever a Lycanthrope or Shape-Shifter tries to resist the Urge, consult this table to determine the effects:

Result of WP test	Description	Effect
Incredible success	Effortless restraint	Impeccable, the Garou gains +10 WP to their next Urge test
Stunning success	Moderated calm	Serene, the Garou belies no sign of the yearning within
Definite success	Tight curb	Tense but controlled, the Garou battles the turmoil within
Lucky success	Guilty cravings	Agitated, the Garou bristles with ill-disguised hanker
Unlucky failure	Inexorable descent	Bristling, the Garou will Change at any moment (in D10 rounds)
Awful failure	Insatiable thirst	Frothing, the Garou starts to Change <u>next</u> round
Terrible failure	Unbridled desire	Eager, the Garou starts to Change immediately
Horrific failure	Wild abandon	Desperate, the Garou rips into his Change (-10 CI to Change test)

The Change

The monstrous transformation usually takes an entire round throughout which the garou is considered *prone*. During this the garou must pass a **Cool** test to determine the success of the Change:

Result of Cool test	Change description	Mechanical effect
Incredible success	Effortless	As below, plus gain +10 Cool to the garou's next Change
Stunning success	Smooth	Gain +10% to the garou's next test (any)
Definite success	Controlled	None
Lucky success	Rough	Changed but smashed up the surroundings
Unlucky failure	Tense	Takes a few moments longer than usual, i.e. 1 extra round
Awful failure	Agonisingly slow	As above, plus the garou suffers D3W to every location
Terrible failure	Frustrated	Unable to change form! So try again?
Horrific failure	Uncontrolled	Evolves into a random (D4) form, i.e. not the desired form

Suffering

Every Change is exhausting, some are painful and a few truly disturbing. For beyond the physical shift, the garou's mind undergoes a brutal meld, i.e. any double rolled, whether success or failure, indicates that the garou has gained 1 **Corruption Point**.

Hardened

For beginner garou the Change is a traumatising experience but over time it usually becomes less distressing. This phenomenon is best represented by a modifier to their Change test:

Attempt	Tendency	Resulting Modifier to Cool test
First	Traumatising	Very hard (-40) Cool
Second	Horrifying	Hard (-30) Cool
Third	Terrifying	Challenging (-20) Cool
Fourth	Fearsome	Tricky (-10) Cool
Fifth	Formidable	Routine (-) Cool



Destruction

Each Change is such a brutal transformation that it ruins any clothing and/or armour worn by the garou. Moreover there is a small risk (10%) that a personal effect maybe damaged or even destroyed (1%).

Manifestation

Once a garou has Changed into his new form his physical has shifted but so has his mind. This Change is reflected by a change in the garou's statistics but also his skills. Above all, it is the form that the garou shifts into that dictates the extent of this Change. Essentially all garou can change into 1 of 4 forms but in reality only the lycanthropes can freely choose which form to adopt. This is because most shape-shifters have focused on 1 form, the lupus.

Homid

This is the true form for most garou but reverting to this aspect still requires a Change (**Cool** test). However, if slain in another form, a garou will automatically revert to this form, albeit over several minutes. Even in Homid form, many garou bear certain stigmata resulting from their Changes, e.g. meeting of both eyebrows at the bridge of the nose, curved fingernails, low-set ears, a swinging stride and/or a birthmark on the head. Obviously witch hunters and other guardians of civilisation are very sensitive to such traits.

Glabro

This is probably the most common form for *lycanthropes* as it offers greater strength than their human form but is less bloodthirsty than their Crinos and Hispo forms. The garou's physical appearance changes taking certain attributes of the wolf; body hair becomes longer and thicker, teeth and nails elongate, the brow slopes, and the character looks huge and menacing. Even their eyes turn a pale orange, almost yellow. Speech is still possible but only in guttural tones. This form is so widespread in Norsca that it is called the *kveldulf* or "evening-wolf" as by nightfall it can be difficult to distinguish between the 2 forms. However outside of Norsca, many societies, especially in the Empire, a glabro is often viewed as mutant.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
			+5		+1								-10

Talents: Formidable, Natural Weapons

Formidable: your formidable countenance scares many, i.e. Very Easy (+30) *Fear* test for all opponents.

Natural Weapons: any unarmed attacks count as natural weapons, i.e. no **WS** penalty & D3 damage.

Crinos

This is by far the most terrifying form for both the victim but also the garou. The Change unleashes a massive growth spurt for it gains 50% in height (yes, a 6-foot man becomes a 9-foot Crinos) and 100% in weight. The body is covered in fur and the head becomes that of a snarling canine. Fangs and talons are now pronounced and the arms become long and apelike, suitable for running on all fours. The addition of a tail helps the garou maintain its balance. Speech is very difficult, being reduced to a sentence or two spat in harsh tones:

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
+1	+5		+10	+5	+5	+5	+1	-10	+10	-5		-5	-10

Skills: Concealment, Silent Move, Blood lust

Talents: Terrifying, Natural Weapons, Keen Senses, Frenzy

Terrifying: your terrifying countenance horrifies many, i.e. Simple (+10) *Fear* test for all opponents.

Blood lust: any character or creature that fails a **WP** test suffers a burning desire to slake its thirst with the blood of its enemies, i.e. spill blood at the first opportunity and drink your cup!

Hispo

This form is favoured by garou seeking to hunt or flee for it offers great speed and endurance. The Hispo is a huge (10-foot long), hulking beast resembling the dreaded Dire Wolf with a massive head and jaws. Speech is impractical with humans, beyond a word or two spat through gritted teeth, whereas possible with wolves.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
+2	+10		+5	+10	+4	+10	+1	-20		-10		-10	-20

Skills: Concealment, Silent Move, Follow Trail, Blood lust

Talents: Fearsome, Natural Weapons, Keen Senses

Fearsome: your fearsome countenance terrifies many, i.e. Easy (+20) *Fear* test for all opponents.

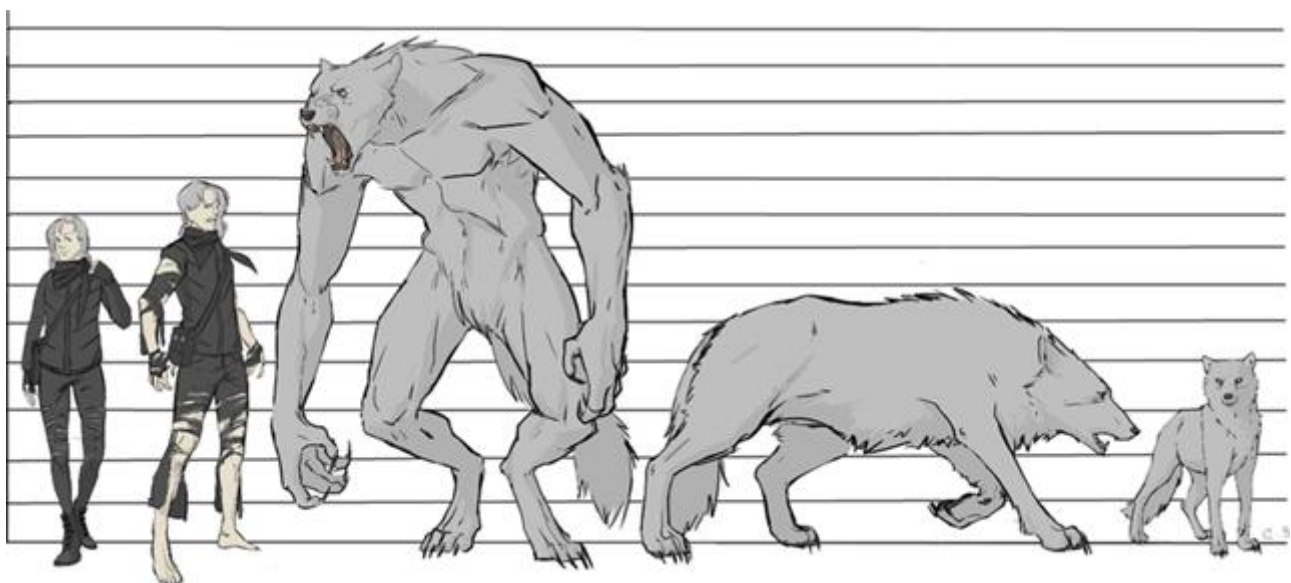
Lupus or Wolf-struck

This form is favoured by Shape-shifters as they deem the Glabro too intimidating and the Crinos as well as the Hispo too wild. Whereas speech with humans is hopeless, it comes effortlessly with wolves.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
9	39	0	29	29	5	29	2	9	19	19	29	29	19

Skills: Concealment, Silent Move, Follow Trail, Swim

Talents: Natural Weapons, Keen Senses, Night Vision



Local legends

Many scholars claim that, regardless of their form, garou share certain attributes, notably:

- *"Garou never really die but instead fall into a deep sleep from which they later awake"* – indeed upon reaching death Garou drift into a torpor in which they slowly regenerate (recovering 1W per hour).
- *"Ye silver weapon doth inflict o most heinous of wounds"* – actually this is untrue (due to the exploits of the Argent family of Witch Hunters) but few have lived to warn others. Though it should be noted that blessed weapons cause significant (+1W) wounds.
- *"The only true way to kill a garou, is to drive a stake through their heart!"* - this is absolute true.
- *"Don't eat meat from a wolf-killed lamb or you risk becoming a verwolf!"* - this is utter rubbish.
- *"There's no known cure, only cold steel!"* – indeed this seems to be accurate (see below).

Remedies

Despite centuries of studies and experimentation, man has yet to discover a cure for the garou. Until then the only hope appears to be Monkshood or Wolfsbane. This pretty but highly toxic flower naturally repels werecreatures, i.e. it forces them to make a **WP** test to come within 6 yards of it. This herb is also the main ingredient in the Truefoil poison. Should the werecreature ingest or be infected with Truefoil then they must pass a *poison* (standard T test) or *Infected Wounds* (varies, see above) test.

Should it fail, the werecreature becomes nauseous (-1/-10) and must move away from the source of the poison for one round. It may (at GM's discretion) pass a **WP** test to approach that source again. If two doses are administered and the tests failed, then the werecreature is seriously weakened (-2/-20), before vomiting uncontrollably (*prone* for 1 round) and finally reverting to its Homid form, where it suffers from burning in the mouth and face. Should the werecreature seek to change form again, they will find their Urge more reluctant than ever, i.e. 20% bonus to **WP** test. If three tests are failed, then the werecreature is critically weakened (-3/-30) and suffers tingling sensations which quickly (D10 rounds) numb their limbs (paralysis) before slowly (D10 turns) but quietly dying. Finally it should be borne in mind that Wolfsbane, while not a rare herb, can only be found in mountain meadows. Its scarcity renders it expensive (15 GCs per dose), especially outside of summer (30 GCs).



Local gossip

"Up north there are whispers of some men transforming into horrifying beasts in the thick of battle..."
"There be 'frightening spirits' in the woods with human features that walked on four legs"

Children of Ulric

Also known as Step-Brood or Lost Children, these men and women are worshiped by certain extremists with the Ulrican faith such as the Sons of Ulric. For beyond their martial prowess, many see within them a physical manifestation of Lord Ulric's copulation with fierce northern maid, Birgit, whom he took as his lover. More conservative Ulricans tend to view these Children of Ulric in curious mix of awe and wonder. Other cults and many citizens, view them with suspicion bordering on fear. Indeed most Sigmarites and witch hunters view them with unbridled hatred, believing them to be abominations; once followers of the Wolf God, but now corrupted by the taints of Dark Gods.

Der Wer

In Norsca, where Chaos exerts greater influence than anywhere else, the touch of the Wer is viewed by many as one of the greatest blessings from the Gods. Indeed it is often ascribed to Tchar (Tzeentch), the Lord of Change. But be warned this condition is seen as an affliction by certain tribes and a curse by most foreigners.

References

WFRP1 rulebook (page 247) & [Warpstone \(WFRP fanzine\)](#), [Diseases in WFRP - Warpstone](#)

WFRP2 rulebook (page 98), Tome of Corruption (pages 54 & 146) & Old World Bestiary (pages 59 & 118)

[Interesting facts about wolves](#)

[Wikipedia article on werewolves](#)

[Unofficial Wiki on Harry Potter Universe, Lycanthropes](#)

[MadAlfred's The Rising Shadow adventure, page 53](#)