

Hyaenas

Introduction

There are four living members of the family Hyaenidae: the spotted or laughing hyaena (*Crocuta crocuta*); the brown hyaena (*Hyaena brunnea*); the striped hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*); and the Aardwolf (*Proteles cristatus*). The family has a long and diverse lineage in prehistory, including the “giant” hyaena *Pachycrocuta brevirostris* of the late Pliocene and early Pleistocene (approximately one-half to three million years ago). Note that the prehistoric animal *Hyaenodon* was an archaic animal unrelated to modern carnivores.

A lot of mythology surrounds the spotted and striped hyaenas, both in Africa and Asia. Striped hyaenas have a particular association with sexual attractiveness throughout the Middle-East and India.

The following document presents some GURPS stats for modern hyaenas, mythological hyaenas, and the giant Pleistocene hyaena. The aardwolf is a small, inoffensive animal that eats termites and is unlikely to give players any trouble. Until there is a GURPS: Termites! Supplement, no further mention will be made of it.

General Description

Hyaenas are largely nocturnal, with good night vision and excellent senses of hearing and smell. Their shoulders are higher than their hips, allowing them to carry large pieces of carrion clear of the ground. They are able to run with an unusual gait called pacing, in which the both limbs on one side of the body move together. Camels are the only other mammal to run in this manner.

The digestive system of hyaenas is very acidic, giving them a good resistance to bacteria along with the ability to digest bone. Combined with their bone-cracking teeth, this makes them very efficient scavengers. However, spotted hyaenas are also very effective pack hunters, often accounting for more kills than big cats when their ranges overlap.

Hyaenas produce a highly pungent paste from glands on their anus. This paste is used to make scent markings and the odour is powerful enough to be detectable by humans.

The external genitalia of male and female spotted hyaenas are very similar. This led mediaeval scholars to a number of erroneous conclusions. It was variously suggested hyaenas were hermaphrodite, able to change their gender at will, obsessed with sex, or practicing homosexuals. They became associated with sexual deviancy, deformity, and depravity in Europe. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote that hyaenas appeared after the biblical Flood as a result of an unnatural union between cats and dogs.

Spotted hyaenas kill large prey such as antelope by mobbing them and effectively eating them alive. I have assumed the giant Pleistocene hyaenas followed the same strategy. To reflect this, both have the following technique:

Technique (Ave): Bite-hold. Defaults to Brawling. Once a successful bite has been made, they will hang on with their very powerful jaws. To prize the hyaena's jaws apart requires two hands and a contest of strength, with the hyaena having a +2 bonus. Alternatively, the victim can attempt to pull away at a straight contest of strength but, regardless of success, the hyaena inflicts bite damage in the process. The hyaena may also opt to re-bite its victim at +2 to hit. If it misses, its bite-hold is lost.

Like all wild animals, hyaenas take no risks and will run away if they feel threatened. This is reflected in their low will score. A female will fight to the death to defend her cubs. Otherwise, a hyaena will always retreat if wounded.

Spotted or Laughing Hyaena

Found in Africa south of the Sahara, the spotted hyaena is the largest and most aggressive modern species. Females are bigger than males and can be up to 5 feet (1.5 m) long, 3 feet (91 cm) high, and weigh to 180 lbs (81 kg). They live in socially complicated, matriarchal clans of up to 80 individuals. Research has shown their social intelligence appears to be on a par with primates.

Spotted hyaenas have short, dull brown hair and, true to their name, are covered in large black spots. They have a short mane, a powerful head and neck, rounded hind-quarters, and a short tail. The name laughing hyaena comes from the insane, human-like cackling they make when excited.

Spotted hyaenas hunt either alone, in small groups of 2 or 3, or as a pack. Hyaenas have much more courage in a pack: for every 2 hyaenas, increase the will score by 1, up to a maximum of +3.

It is rare, although not unknown for spotted hyaenas to attack and kill people. They are a much bigger problem as takers of livestock.

Mythology

In some parts of Africa, spotted hyaenas are thought to be used as mounts by witches, although it has to be said, the witches would need to be quite small.

Certain tribes, including the Massai, leave their dead in the open for Hyaenas to eat. It is a matter of social disgrace if the corpse is not eaten, so bodies are often covered in fat and blood from an Ox.

In Tanzania, spotted hyaena dung is thought to help children walk at an early age if it is wrapped in their clothes. However, if a child is born at night when a hyaena is crying, the child will grow up a thief. There is no GURPS spell that this could translate to, though the dung could be seen as a (rather unsavoury) source of manna

Werehyaenas feature in some mythical African tribes, notably the Bouda. Often blacksmiths by profession, they are recognisable in human form by having red, gleaming eyes, lots of body hair, and a nasal voice. They can sometimes also have magical powers of healing. However, every night, they transform into a hyaena and are compelled to seek out local graveyards to dig up corpses to eat. When discovered, such werehyaenas are put to death. In hyaena form, they retain their human intelligence but, if slain, they do not return to their human form.

Standard Spotted Hyaena

ST: 10 **Will:** 8 **Dodge:** 9
DX: 10 **Per:** 14 **Move:** 9
IQ: 5 **Speed:** 6 **SM:** -1
HT: 10 **HP:** 10 **Dam:** 1d-1 cut

Traits: Discriminating Smell, Night Vision 2, Quadruped, Sharp Teeth, Wild Animal, Resistant (bad food), Noisy (2).

Skills: Brawling 12, Bite/hold technique 12, Tracking 16.

Mythological Spotted Hyaena

ST: 10 **Will:** 8 **Dodge:** 9
DX: 10 **Per:** 14 **Move:** 9
IQ: 7 **Speed:** 6 **SM:** -1
HT: 10 **HP:** 10 **Dam:** 1d-1 cut

Traits: Discriminating Smell, Night Vision 2, Quadruped, Sharp Teeth, Wild Animal, Resistant (bad food), Noisy (2), Hermaphromorph, Lecherousness. A fresh dropping will have 1 manna point for 1d6 hours.

Skills: Brawling 12, Bite/hold technique 12, Tracking 16.

Bouda racial template

A human who turns into a hyaena at sunset and back into a human at sunrise, with the transformation taking a full minute. It costs either -17 points or 13 points if the optional Healing advantage is taken. Bouda have red-rimmed, bloodshot eyes, so often take up jobs that can explain this, such as being a blacksmith.

Although they crave human corpses, they suffer no penalty if they are unable to come by them. In hyaena form, they have all the traits of a mythological hyaena (see above), except their intelligence and will scores are as per their human form.

A bouda is created either through two bouda having children or through a normal person being cursed. See the section on new spells at the end of this document. An example bouda is included at the end of this document.

Attribute Modifiers: HT+1 [10], ST+1[10]

Advantages: Alternate Form (mythological spotted hyaena, uncontrollable, triggered by sunset every night) [5], Animal Empathy (Hyaenas) [2], Doesn't Sleep [20], optional Healing [30]

Disadvantages: Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Human Corpses) [-15], Secret Identity (Hyaena) [-30], Lecherousness (12) [-15], Unattractive Appearance (red-rimmed, bloodshot eyes, hairy body, nasal voice) [-4].

Striped Hyaena

Found in north-eastern Africa and from Asia Minor to India, the striped hyaena is the smallest species. An adult male is around 4 feet (1.2 m) long, 30 inches (76 cm) high, and weighs around 85 lbs (38.2 kg). Females are smaller. Stripped hyaenas have a semi-erect mane used extensively in communication that runs from their heads to the middle of their backs. Their hair is much longer than that of spotted hyaenas.

They are largely scavengers, but also eat fruit, insects and small animals. Some larger subspecies hunt medium sized prey such as wild boars. Although solitary when foraging and hunting, they associate in small family groups at their dens. They are nomadic within a given range and do not defend their territory.

Recorded attacks on humans are rare, although there are periodic accounts of them taking children.

When an individual striped hyaena is cornered, for example by dogs, it will play dead in the hope it will be left unmolested.

Mythology

In the Middle East, stripped Hyaenas are regarded as the physical incarnation of jinns. If this were the case, striped hyaena would an Alternate Form advantage for a jinn.

In 1376 in Delhi, a Persian doctor-magician wrote down a cure for someone who can transform themselves into a striped hyaena. Considered "half-man, half-hyaena" and referred to as a kaftar (the Persian word for striped hyaena), such a being is known to attack and kill children.

Some Persian myths describes striped hyaenas as vampires that attack people at night to drain the blood through their necks. Such attacks are only carried out on brave people.

Arab folklore relates that striped hyaenas can mesmerise people with their eyes or odours.

Greek myths indicate that if the body of a slain werewolf was not destroyed, it would haunt battlefields as a vampiric hyaena, drinking the blood of dying soldiers.

In northern India, witches or magicians are said to ride striped hyenas at night. As with the spotted hyaena-riding witches mentioned above, it would be a very small person that could ride a striped hyaena.

There are lots of association between parts of the striped hyaena's body and obtaining the carnal affections of a desired partner, such as:

- The anus of a hyaena worn as an amulet on the upper arm makes a male possessor irresistible to women (Greek, Roman)
- A dried striped hyaena pelt makes its owner irresistible to the opposite sex (Iranian).
- Striped hyaena hair makes a potent love potion (Afghanistan and Pakistan).
- Burned striped hyaena fat applied to a man's genitals ensures virility (India).
- If a man peers at a woman through a striped hyaena's vulva that has been kept wrapped in silk in his armpit for a week, he can be sure the woman will eventually be his (Afghanistan). You have to give them top marks for trying, at least...
- The dried genitalia of a striped hyaena kept in a household keep a marriage going (Greek, Roman).

There are also myths about parts of the animal being useful for medicinal purposes:

- Striped hyaena hair makes potent medicine (Afghanistan and Pakistan).
- Burned striped hyaena fat applied cures rheumatism (India).
- Eating the tongue of a striped hyaena helps fight tumours (India)

Standard Striped Hyaena

ST: 9 **Will:** 7 **Dodge:** 9
DX: 10 **Per:** 14 **Move:** 9
IQ: 4 **Speed:** 6 **SM:** -1
HT: 10 **HP:** 8 **Dam:** 1d-2 cut

Traits: Discriminating Smell, Night Vision 2, Quadruped, Sharp Teeth, Wild Animal, Resistant (bad food), Noisy (2), HP -1.

Skills: Brawling 12, Tracking 16, Play-dead 10.

Mythological Striped Hyaena

ST: 9 **Will:** 7 **Dodge:** 9
DX: 10 **Per:** 14 **Move:** 9
IQ: 4 **Speed:** 6 **SM:** -1
HT: 10 **HP:** 8 **Dam:** 1d-2 cut

Traits: Discriminating Smell, Night Vision 2, Quadruped, Sharp Teeth, Wild Animal, Resistant (bad food), HP-2.

Skills: Brawling 12, Tracking 16, Play-dead 10, Spell: Mental Stun 12 (Magic p.135) by eye-contact at will (this requires concentration and 2FP), Spell: Mental Stun 12 by aroma once per day (area of affect is six hexagons, with the hyaena at the centre, does not require concentration but still costs 2FP).

All parts of the body dried will provide a one-shot 2 point mana source. Sexual organs and hair used as an ingredient in any love magic, elixir, or potion, will increase the potency by a factor of 2. Similarly, hair or fat used as an ingredient in any healing magic, elixir, or potion, will increase the potency by a factor of 1.5.

Mythological hyaenas will use their mental stun magic to disable characters while the hyaena makes off with something valuable or tasty (or both) from the party's camp.

Persian Vampire Striped Hyena

These vampiric striped hyenas are very fussy feeders and will only attack brave characters. They are able to detect anyone within a mile-radius who has any of the traits Fearlessness, Combat Reflexes, Indomitable, High Pain Threshold, or Unfazeable. By preference, a striped hyena will track a lone traveller until the opportunity presents itself for the hyena to attack its victim while asleep.

Vampiric hyenas have the Stealth skill. When they bite, they cast a Strike Numb spell so their victim is not awakened. Fortunately, they seldom drain all of a victim's blood, preferring to return on subsequent nights to feed. When feeding like this, the vampiric hyena will only drink around half the victim's HP.

If a vampiric hyena is unable to find a victim, it can survive on a normal diet of carrion of small prey. It just prefers to sustain itself on the blood of brave individuals. Its bite does 1d-2 impaling damage.

ST: 9 **Will:** 7 **Dodge:** 9
DX: 10 **Per:** 14 **Move:** 9
IQ: 7 **Speed:** 6 **SM:** -1
HT: 10 **HP:** 8 **Dam:** 1d-2 imp

Traits: Discriminating Smell, Night Vision 2, Quadruped, Sharp Teeth, Wild Animal, Resistant (bad food), HP-2, Vampiric Bite (-1 HP per second), Uncontrollable Appetite (humanoid blood)

Skills: Brawling 12, Tracking 16, Play-dead 10, Stealth 12, Spell: Strike Numb 14 at no fatigue cost.

Kaftar

Kaftar are cursed humans who can take the form of either a mythological striped hyena or a werehyena. The word kaftar is actually the Persian word for striped hyena. They are referred to in a document written in Delhi in 1376, and are described as both a person who can take the form of a hyena and also as "half-man, half-hyena". I have used this to justify the two alternate forms. What is clear is that they seek to slay and devour children and that, with the right counter-curse, can be cured.

Kaftar are created via a special curse. See the section on magic at the end of this document.

In human form, kaftar appear completely normal. However, their desire to devour children is always with them. They will do anything they can to abduct, kill, and eat any child left alone with them.

Transforming from their human form to werehyena form takes a full minute. In this form, their head transforms into a striped hyena's and their upper torso and arms are covered in coarse, striped fur. They retain the ability to speak their human tongue but can also talk to hyenas. All skills and traits possessed in their human form can be used while in werehyena form.

From werehyena, a kaftar can spend another minute to transform into a hyena. In their hyena form, they have all the powers of a mythological striped hyena but retain their human intelligence. They can also use any human skills or advantages that do not require a human voice or the dexterity of hands. In hyena form, they are unable to speak in their human tongue.

The template for a kaftar costs -15 points.

Human Form:

Advantages: Alternate Form (mythological spotted hyena) [15], Alternate Form (werehyena) [15].

Disadvantages: Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Devour Human Children) [-15], Secret Identity (Kaftar) [-30].

Werehyena Form:

Attribute Modifiers: HT+1 [10], ST+1[10]

Advantages: Speak With Animals (Striped Hyenas) [5], Teeth (1) [5], Discriminatory Smell [15], Discriminatory Hearing[15], Hermaphro-morph [5].

Disadvantages: Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Devour Human Children) [-15], Lecherousness (12) [-15], Bad Reputation (4) [-20], Noisy (2) [-4].

Skills: Tracking (DX +4)

Brown Hyena

Found in southern Africa, the brown hyena is intermediate in size between the spotted and striped hyenas, with individuals between 70.6-86.8 cm in shoulder height, and weigh between 35-50 kg. There is little difference in size between the sexes.

The coat is long and shaggy and they have hairs on the back of the neck which can erect to form a small mane. They form small clans of up to six individuals, they forage alone, and do not maintain a territory. Primarily scavengers, they frequently forage along shorelines, eating anything from beached whales to turtles. This habit has given rise to their alternate name of strandwolf. They very rarely hunt and reports of attacks on humans are unknown.

I have been unable to find any recorded mythology around brown hyenas.

Use the same statistics for standard striped hyenas.

Giant Pleistocene Hyena

Fossils of this animal were first found in eastern and southern Africa. However, it is best known from remains found in Europe and Asia, where it survived for longer. This animal appears to be half as big again as a spotted hyena, with a length of around 6 feet (1.8 m), a height of 4 feet (120 cm), and a weight of around 270 lbs (120 kg).

Because of its range, it must have been reasonably comfortable in cold climates. A very heavyset animal, it was not really built for pursuing prey over long distances.

ST: 12 **Will:** 10 **Dodge:** 9
DX: 10 **Per:** 14 **Move:** 9
IQ: 4 **Speed:** 6 **SM:** 0
HT: 10 **HP:** 12 **Dam:** 1d cut

Traits: Discriminating Smell, Night Vision 2, Quadruped, Sharp Teeth, Wild Animal, Resistant (bad food), Noisy (2).

Skills: Brawling 12, Bite/hold technique 12, Tracking 16

New Spells

The following two new spells can be learnt as part of the Animal Spells group. Both are curses and are most effective against people with unpleasant traits: Bad Temper, Berserk, Blood Lust, Bully, Callous, Cowardice, Gluttony, Laziness, Lechery, Miserliness, Odious Personal Habits, Sadism, and Selfishness all impart a -3 to the save of the target.

Conversely, good traits impart some protection: Blessed, Clerical Investment, Charitable, Code of Honour, Disciplines of Faith, Duty, Honesty, Humble, Higher Purpose, Sense of Duty, True Faith, and Truthfulness all impart a +3 to will.

