

Labyrinth Lord

Dogs in the Dungeon

By Daniel Proctor

Introduction

Despite being “man’s best friend,” dogs have not received as much discussion as retainers for companions in dungeon exploration. Dogs have several advantages over hired help. This article presents additional optional rules and information about selecting and employing dogs in the dungeon. As with all optional additions to the *Labyrinth Lord* rules, referees should feel free to use some or all of this new material, altering anything according to tastes.

One advantage to using dogs instead of retainers from a player’s perspective is that aside from a small cost to feed and possibly armor a fighting dog, the initial investment in the cost of the dog is the only major expense to the dungeoneer. A dog does not receive a share of the treasure! In addition, one must negotiate with a retainer and there is a risk of a negative outcome. At the end of an adventure, there is no check to see whether a dog will refuse to accompany a character on additional adventures, as there is with retainers. Although war dogs will check morale in certain situations, they generally have a high morale due to their training that is totally independent from their owner’s CHA score. Finally, one of the biggest advantages at the game level (rather than from the character’s perspective) is that dogs do not normally receive a share of experience points (see the optional rules below for an alternative to this).

However, as presented in the core *Labyrinth Lord* and *Advanced Edition Companion* rules, dogs might be just a little *too* advantageous as adventuring companions from the referee’s point of view. Once players catch on to the advantages of buying guard dogs, a referee can probably envision entire packs of dogs being employed and laying waste to everything in their path. Pretty soon dungeoneering

is only an exercise in animal handling. Well, gentle referee, have no fear. The following rules expansions may be used and/or modified to apply greater depth (and some consequences) to employing *dogs in the dungeon*.

Dog Types

The following types of dogs might be used to add depth and flavor to the use of war or guard dogs in a *Labyrinth Lord* campaign. Care has been taken to select dog types that are deeply rooted in history, so more recently developed breeds are not used. However, there is no reason a referee could not include them using the types below as a reference. In addition, this is by no means an exhaustive list of dogs that trace lineage in history, and referees are encouraged to research additional breeds if there is a desire to expand these offerings.

It should be noted that when dogs are used in this context it is assumed that even the types not specialized for fighting are trained to obey and remain calm in combat. All dogs here may be directed to attack like war dogs, but some types are more suited than others. Standard and more widely available scenthounds, waterhounds, and sighthounds are not trained for this and they would have much lower costs than those presented here.

Finally, in the dog descriptions the indicated height is referring to the height of the animals at the withers, or the top of the shoulders, not counting any height added when the head and neck are elevated.

Fighting or Guard Hounds

The dogs in this category are the “typical” war/guard dogs whose statistics are listed in the *Advanced Edition Companion* under the heading **Dog, War**, unless otherwise



noted. They are trained to follow verbal and gestural instructions, and are capable of being directed to move to relatively specific locations and attack specific targets. These dogs do not spook easily and are trained to ignore most distractions in order to pay close attention to their master's desires.

Alaunt Butcher: These dogs are “proto-bulldogs,” originally bred for strength to defend herd animals from predators, but are also used as fighting and war dogs. They are short-haired dogs ranging in color from pure white or cream (most common) to any shade or combination of brown, black, or white. They sometimes have darker “tiger-stripe-like” (brindle) markings across their backs and sides. *Cost: 25 gp*

Alaunt Butcher Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 20" + 2d6"	Height: 17" + 2d4"
Weight: 60 + 1d10x10 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d8x10 lbs.

Molossus: This is a very large dog bred for fighting, and is an ancestor of dogs like the mastiff. It has a wide range of appearances, in any shade of brown, black, white, or combinations of these. The Molossus has the game statistics of **Dog, War** from the *Advanced Edition Companion*, but it has 3 HD. *Cost: 45 gp*

Molossus Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 30" + 2d6"	Height: 27" + 2d4"
Weight: 150 + 1d12x10 lbs.	Weight: 120 + 1d10x10 lbs.

Rottweiler: These dogs may have originally been bred to guard and herd animals, but have been used primarily as guard dogs for most of their existence. Rottweilers have a black body with dark tan markings on the legs and snout. *Cost: 25 gp*

Rottweiler Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 22" + 1d6"	Height: 20" + 1d6"
Weight: 100 + 1d4x10 lbs.	Weight: 80 + 1d6x5 lbs.

Scenthounds

Scenthounds, like all retriever-type dogs, are incredibly observant of their masters and follow directions very well. They are bred to track game, and in the dungeon they serve mostly as watch dogs and to scout ahead. In this capacity they are trained to move ahead certain distances by command and wait for further instructions. They can move ahead and make a gestural indication (like the tail straight up, or right paw elevated, or something of the like) if they are still on a scent or detect a particular scent. Scenthounds use the game statistics of **Dog, Wild** from the *Advanced Edition Companion*.

Their highly developed sense of smell allows scenthounds to pick up the trail of something they have recently been exposed to 90% of the time, -10% per 6 turns since the creature or object has passed that way. The referee may apply other modifiers as he sees fit. For example, a target passing through running water might reduce the ability to track by 50%. Finally, a scenthound may be specially trained

to always recognize up to 1d3+1 smells of particular objects or creatures, such as orcs, goblins, dwarves, or other animals or materials. The same tracking probability applies. If a scenthound is allowed to sniff at a door to a room containing the relevant scent target it will detect such a scent on a roll of 1-3 on 1d6. These permanent scents must be decided when the dog is purchased and sent for training (see Training Scent Hounds, below).

Boar Hound (Plott Hound): These dogs were originally bred for boar hunting. They are medium build dogs, primarily black bodied with a brown brindle pattern. *Cost: 25 gp*

Boar Hound Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 20" + 1d8"	Height: 20" + 1d6"
Weight: 40 + 1d4x10 lbs.	Weight: 30 + 1d4x10 lbs.

St. Hubert (Bloodhound): This “classic” bloodhound can trace its roots far back in time, and was bred to hunt deer and boar. They have black and tan coats, or sometimes red. *Cost: 25 gp*

St. Hubert Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 20" + 1d6"	Height: 17" + 1d6"
Weight: 60 + 1d10x10 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d8x10 lbs.

Talbot: These stocky dogs were bred for hunting in northern climates. They have pure white fur. *Cost: 25 gp*

Talbot Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 18" + 1d6"	Height: 16" + 1d6"
Weight: 60 + 1d10x10 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d8x10 lbs.

Training Scenthounds

When a scenthound is purchased it is already trained for general duty. However, if the owner wants to train it to permanently remember the 1d3+1 scents it is capable of he must work with the dog over time. A scenthound must be exposed to the desired smell daily for a month, and made to locate the scent at least five times each day by hiding it in a nearby place that forces the dog to search for it for 1 round. It will take 1d4+1 weeks per scent to commit it to memory, and multiple scents may be trained simultaneously. After the given time the scent is in the dog's memory and it can be used to sniff near doors or track without exposing it again to the smell. A scenthound can be trained to give a different sign for each smell so that the owner knows which smell it has picked up on.

Sighthounds

Sighthounds are primarily bred to spot game, retrieve fallen game, or even attack large game. As hounds for the dungeon or wilderness companions, sighthounds are useful for spotting dangers and quickly retrieving items. These hounds use the game statistics of **Dog, Wild** from the *Advanced Edition Companion*, unless otherwise noted.

Sighthounds may be instructed to guard a camp or other area, and can spot approaching creatures even when they are proceeding cautiously. They notice approaching

creatures on a roll of 1-3 on 1d6 during the day or lighted conditions, and 1-2 on 1d6 in darkness that is above ground, or in very dim light underground. In all cases creatures must be within line of sight.

Alaunt Gentile: A kind of “proto-greyhound,” these dogs are bred for hunting and fast retrieval of game. Bred for speed rather than strength or endurance, they are of a lighter build, resembling greyhounds in body type. They are closely related to the Alaunt Butcher, and have a similar coat appearance. The Alaunt Gentile is capable of short bursts of speed, and can move at 240' (80') sustained for 15 consecutive rounds, or 8 rounds a day if interspersed. The ground must be relatively level and unobstructed. If sustained for the maximum duration, the dog must rest for 1 turn afterward. *Cost: 25 gp*

Alaunt Gentile Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 26" + 1d4"	Height: 24" + 1d4"
Weight: 50 + 1d4x10 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d6x5 lbs.

Deerhound: A deerhound has a similar build to the Alaunt Gentile, but is built much taller and heavier. They have coarse hair that comes in a variety of colors, from golden or tan to brindle, gray or blue-gray, and various combinations of these. Deerhounds were originally bred to hunt deer and other large, fast game.

The deerhound is capable of bursts of speed similar to the Alaunt Gentile, but the movement is 210' (70') and the terrain can be rough or hilly. *Cost: 25 gp*

Deerhound Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 30" + 2d6"	Height: 27" + 2d4"
Weight: 80 + 1d4x10 lbs.	Weight: 70 + 1d4x5 lbs.

Wolfhound: The wolfhound fairly closely resembles the deerhound, but it is generally even larger. It was bred for hunting wolves, as the name implies, and it is a very rugged and fast dog. It may have the same coloration as the deerhound, with a similar coat that is longer and shaggy.

Wolfhounds have the game statistics of **Wolf, Ordinary** from the *Labyrinth Lord* core rules. However, they have the same capability of bursts of speed as the deerhound. *Cost: 30 gp*

Wolfhound Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 34" + 2d6"	Height: 32" + 2d4"
Weight: 100 + 1d6x10 lbs.	Weight: 90 + 1d6x10 lbs.

Waterhounds

Waterhounds are retriever-type dogs that have a similar function to sighthounds. However, they are specially bred to be adept in water. Normally, dogs swim at half their movement rate. Waterhounds only suffer a 1/3 penalty to movement in water. In addition, they can dive underwater to retrieve sunken items to a maximum depth of 20'.

Waterhounds are also capable of dragging considerable weight in the water while swimming. They can drag less than 50% of their body weight in water without trouble. They can

drag 50-100% of their own body weight at half movement for 4d4 rounds before succumbing to exhaustion, or up to double their body weight at 1/3 movement for 2d4 rounds. After the duration the dog must drop whatever it is dragging to avoid complete exhaustion and drowning. Alternatively, the dog can be forced to push beyond its stamina for an additional 1d4 rounds, after which time the dog will automatically drown if it is still in deep water. These hounds use the game statistics of **Dog, Wild** from the *Advanced Edition Companion*.

Pudle: The Pudle is a medium built dog that has a unique curly type of hair, which is somewhat oily to shed water. Their hair must be trimmed down fairly often (every four weeks or so) lest it become extremely long and unwieldy. Pudles have a wide range of solid coat colors, including black, brown, blue, white, cream, gray, red, and rarely they have splotches of one of these colors on a different base color. *Cost: 25 gp*

Pudle Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 18" + 2d4"	Height: 16" + 2d4"
Weight: 50 + 1d8x5 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d6x5 lbs.

St. John's Dog: This dog is an ancestor of Golden and Labrador Retrievers, among other similar breeds. They are medium in build, with a black body and white on the muzzle, chest, and tips of the feet. *Cost: 25 gp*

St. John's Dog Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 20" + 1d6"	Height: 19" + 1d4"
Weight: 60 + 1d6x5 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d4x5 lbs.

Water Spaniel (English): Water Spaniels have medium-length white, curly fur with spots colored brown or liver. Sometimes the entire back is brown/liver. Like the Pudle, the fur is oily to shed water, but not as curly and it does not require the frequent trimming. *Cost: 25 gp*

Water Spaniel Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 22" + 1d4"	Height: 20" + 1d4"
Weight: 60 + 1d6x5 lbs.	Weight: 50 + 1d4x5 lbs.

Exotic Hounds

The following exotic dogs might be included in a campaign. However, they should be very rare. They have unusual origins and will come at a high price.

Hel Docga: These dogs are very intimidating, and are thought to have hell hound blood in them. Like hell hounds, they have short red or brick-colored fur. They are large like a Molossus, have the same game statistics, and are treated as war dogs. The Hel Docga has inherited the hell hound immunity to damage from non-magical fire. *Cost: 500 gp*

Hel Docga Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 32" + 2d6"	Height: 29" + 2d4"
Weight: 160 + 1d12x10 lbs.	Weight: 130 + 1d10x10 lbs.

Faden Docga: These dogs are extremely intelligent, and thought to be descended from blink dogs. They have short cream or steel gray-colored fur. The Faden Docga is treated like a war dog, but it is capable of understanding and following complex instructions. It understands the common tongue (or the master's language) and has an INT of 6. In addition, though it lacks the blink dog ability to blink in and out of existence, it has a "fading" ability that mimics a limited *displacement* ability. It causes attackers to suffer -1 to hit in combat, and provides a +1 to save versus wands, spells, spell-like devices, and petrify effects. *Cost: 750 gp*

Faden Docga Body Sizes	
Males	Females
Height: 24" + 1d6"	Height: 22" + 1d6"
Weight: 110 + 1d4x10 lbs.	Weight: 90 + 1d6x5 lbs.

New Hound Rules

The new rules presented below are entirely optional. They add some degree of additional complexity to the game, but on the other hand they provide some consequences to using dogs in the dungeon.

Dominance

Dogs are pack animals, and as such they require a dominance structure to achieve harmony in a group. It is assumed that all of the dogs presented here are very well trained. They do not challenge the dominance of their masters. In any group where two or more dogs are present there will be struggles for dominance between the dogs. This will not occur during an encounter, due to the quality of their training, but the referee must roll 1d6 every four turns in the dungeon, or once per day in the wilderness. A roll of 1-2 on 1d6 indicates a dominance struggle, and the dogs get into a physical scuffle. The goal of the altercation is to achieve dominance, not kill. Unless there is intervention, the altercation will take place for 1d6 rounds, during which time they are growling, barking, and otherwise making plenty of noise that may attract wandering monsters on a roll of 1 on 1d6. The competing dogs may be separated, but the altercation is not finished and the referee will continue to roll to see if a fight breaks out later.

After the altercation each dog suffers 1d4 hp damage. The winner is determined by rolling 1d00. The base chance for one or the other dog to achieve dominance is 50%. The heavier dog has a bonus of +2% per pound heavier than the other dog. For example, if a 75 pound dog and a 65 pound dog enter conflict, the heavier dog has a 70% chance of achieving dominance. If the referee rolls 70 or lower, the heavier dog wins. If he rolls 71+ the lighter dog wins.

If there are more than two dogs in the pack, the referee will determine randomly which two dogs enter conflict, and this process continues pitting an unranked dog against the lowest ranking dog. Anytime an unranked dog loses, it takes a place below the dog that was challenged. If it wins, then it may challenge the next higher ranking dog at a later time as determined by the referee, until it finally loses or achieves the top rank. This whole process continues until all unranked dogs have a place in the hierarchy.

For example, if there are currently three ranked dogs and one unranked dog, the unranked dog would challenge the lowest ranking dog. If it loses, the conflicts come to an end. If it wins, it will later challenge the second ranked dog and so on until it loses or wins the top rank.

If the "top dog" is killed or otherwise separated from the pack for longer than 1d4 days, the entire pack structure is disrupted 70% of the time. Otherwise, the dogs each go up a rank with the second ranked dog taking the dominant first rank without conflict. Anytime a new dog is added to the group it must achieve a rank.

Obviously this system could become tiresome if there is a large pack of dogs in the group. However, the risk of random encounters and attracting monsters makes it a good way to apply consequences to the use of dogs.

Attracting Monsters

As noted in the rules for dominance, fights for status require a random encounter check. In addition, when more than two dogs are present in a group, all normal random encounter checks rolled every 2 turns by the referee results in an encounter on a roll of 1-2 on 1d6 (rather than a roll of 1) due to the scent of the dogs attracting the attention of creatures.

Taming Wolves

Occasionally PCs may encounter wild wolf cubs and seek to tame them. Dogs have been bred to be less aggressive and more trainable, so wolves may never be trained to perform in the same way as war dogs. A trained wolf will cease obeying commands in an encounter 30% of the time, and will attack random enemies instead of attacking a specific one as indicated by its master. In such a situation there is a 20% chance that once enemies are eliminated the wolf turns its attacks to a random member of the party, its master not excluded.

Further, when a wolf is involved in struggles for dominance, the participants will each suffer 2d4 hp damage instead of 1d4.

Experience

Although dogs do not receive experience points like retainers, the referee may opt to apply a penalty to experience points earned when dogs are involved in an encounter. The value penalty could be relatively low compared to the proportion retainers receive. It is suggested that a flat 2% penalty be applied to group experience for an encounter *per dog employed*. However, the argument could be made that even though dogs cannot perform as many duties as retainers, they are selfless allies who will sacrifice themselves for their masters. In addition, they receive no treasure. Using that logic it may be appropriate to apply the normal retainer deduction to group experience, totaling half a share per dog.

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