

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #20: Mutation Modifiers



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Just as a single change to a stock creature can result in a very different and distinct entity, mutation modifiers can expand the scope and variety of *Mutant Future* mutational powers, altering them slightly with bonuses or penalties. With little or no tweaking, these modifiers can also be applied to supernatural powers — such as spell-like abilities — used in games from other genres.

Modifiers may be acquired at different times during the game. The first would be during character generation, if the player creates a mutant character. Then during game play, the player also checks for modifiers every time the character gains a new mutation — be it from radiation exposure or a mutation cascade (described in an upcoming mutations book from Skirmisher Publishing LLC). A check is done by rolling a d6 for each new mutation/drawback; if a 1 results the particular mutation has a modifier. If it suits their settings and campaigns MLs may want to use a different die type, to increase or decrease the rarity of modifiers.

Some modifiers, like **Tech**, can be lost during the game without much difficulty. Others, like biological modifiers for physical mutations might only be removed with the loss of the affected organ or body part (it is possible the mutation will be **Grafted** onto another character; see below).

To randomly determine modifiers, consult the numbered list below, rolling a d6 for the tens digit and a d10 for the units digit. Many modifiers will only apply to certain kinds of mutations, so if the resulting modifier cannot be applied to a mutation, roll again.

Two notes: in keeping with the “less is more” OSR philosophy, the descriptions below were designed so *Mutant Lords* could make changes that fit their settings, or suited making their own creatures. And, where the description states “for the PCs,” this means mutations possessed by player characters, rather used against them.

10) Accelerated means the mutant automatically makes initiative when using this mutation.

11) Activated requires the target be exposed to a certain stimulus for the mutation effect to function. For example, those who touch giant hogweed must avoid sunlight (which reacts with oils the hogweed secretes to create an irritant),



or be forced to make a save versus poison.

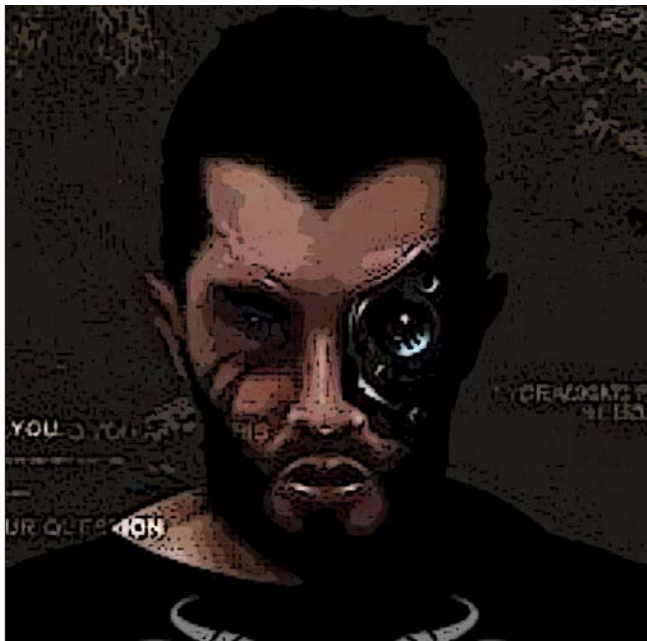
12) Addictive mutations give users a high every time they are used. Mutants must save versus stun to avoid using these mutations at inappropriate times.

13) Alternate Appearance changes how the mutation looks. For example, wings are will usually appear to be insectoid, bat, or bird-like. With this modifier, they could be fractal crystals or structures that resemble combs.

14) Amnesia destroys the mutant’s memories. Every use drains either 25 xp or one minute of memories (ML’s pick).

15) Anti-(Mutation) works by preventing others from using a specific mutation against the mutant. The blocked mutation is selected or rolled when this modifier is acquired. This dampening field operates in two ways, depending on the mutation modified. If the mutation is in continuous operation (like natural armor) then the field functions constantly. However, if the modified mutation must be activated (like a

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ray attack), then this modifier “turns on” with the attack and stays active for at least two rounds after.

16) Battery allows the mutant to store more uses or more energy. With regular use the mutation’s power remains at normal levels, but if the mutation is not used the battery recharges. For every use not expended, increase the range and damage of the mutation by 50%. The maximum power that can be accumulated is 500%, but this massive energy surge only boosts the first use expended after the mutant started adding to the battery, then the power returns to normal. For example, consider *energy ray*, every 3 rounds the mutation is not used, its effect increases by 50%, so every half minute of rest allows the battery to fully recharge. (This may seem crazy but consider other how one mutant plant can throw 8640 explosive fruits per day.)

17) Beacon means the mutation, when activated, can be detected at long distance with the proper equipment.

18) Byproduct leaves a trace of the mutation’s use. Generally this is an odor or powder.

19) Chained mutations go off simultaneously. 75% of the mutants with this modifier have two linked mutations; 20% have three; and 5% have four. The affected mutations are selected when this modifier is rolled.

20) Crippled mutations either reduce the damage inflicted, give a bonus to the target’s saving throw, or reduce the number of targets affected. For PCs, damage is reduced by 50%, saves have a +3 bonus, or 1/2 the number of targets (minimum of one) will be affected.

21) Damaging mutations are enhanced by burning up some of the mutant’s hit points. In exchange for the PC taking

1d4 damage, his mutation either inflicts 50% more damage, penalizes the target’s save by -3, or affects 50% more targets/area.

22) Debilitating mutations, when activated, drain ability points from the mutant. This damage will heal, with 1 point returning for every 10 minutes spent resting. If an ability score is reduced to zero, the mutant will fall into a coma for d4 days. To determine the ability affected and the amount of damage taken, roll 1d6 twice and consult the table below. For 75% of those with this modifier, the ability affected and the amount of damage inflicted remain constant (e.g., the mutant always drains 2 points of STR). The remaining 25% must roll for the ability and damage each time the modified mutation is used.

d6	Ability	d6 Score	Damage
1	STR	1	1
2	DEX	2	d2
3	CON	3	d2
4	INT	4	d3
5	WIL	5	d3
6	CHAR	6	d4

23) Deciduous mutations only function for 6 months of the year (deciduous drawbacks function for 8 months of the year). This may or may not result from the actual loss of the organ involved in the mutation, like leaves losing their leaves during the fall, or it may be that the body part simply becomes dormant for part of the year. If the organ is lost, it will regrow slowly, until the next time it can be used.

24) Doubled mutations are either twice as strong or — for organs, limbs, and other physical additions — there is twice as many. This modifier can provide a mixed energy attack: for example, a ray that inflicts cold and radiation damage at the same time.

25) Disgusting mutations are so nasty that, when activated, all who see them in action must save versus poison or become ill. 10% of disgusting mutations are also **Revolt** (see below).

26) Dream allows a mental mutation to be used only when the mutant is sleeping.

27) Entangled mutations inhibit each other. This modifier is applied to two or more mutations, all of which function at half strength. Roll or select the affected mutations when this modifier is gained.

28) Extra gives an additional version of the mutation. For example, a mutant with *energy ray* might have both the heat and cold powers. This modifier only applies to mutations such as *energy ray* and *reflective epidermis*.

29) Environmental Dependence requires the mutant be exposed to a certain stimulus for the mutation to function.

This effect can also be extended to technology that inhibits the mutation. As an example, consider one specific type of environmental dependence, **Feralization**, a condition in which the mutant reverts to an animalistic (or shrubby) form. This form could be triggered by exposure to moonlight, but suppressed with exposure to silver.

30) Flicker(ing) mutations only work 50% of the time. This modifier cannot be applied to mutations providing a permanent bonus or penalty, such as natural armor.

31) Frightening mutations force any creature who sees them to save versus stun. If the mutation is passive, those failing their save are cowed; if the mutation is active, those who fail will flee. In the case of PCs, the fear effect lasts d4 rounds. MLs should determine how long (how many fear checks are required) it will take until a viewer becomes used to seeing the mutation. This could happen when someone makes her save, or it could be as long as a maximum of 10 failed saves.

32) Fueled mutations require some sort of external power source to function. Typically, this means draining hit points or ability scores from other entities, or siphoning energy from power cells. For PCs, the effect drains either d6 hit points or d3 ability points per use, or one charge from a cell.

33) Grafted mutations come from a donor, and require surgery to transfer. Some will result in the donor's death, and sometimes the recipient may die from infection. The grafts do not last long without medical assistance, unless the donor material comes from a genetically similar donor, such as a sibling or clone.

34) Healing restores d4 hit points to the mutant every time the mutation is used.

35) Heat Flash is the result of metabolic waste. Each time the mutant uses the modified mutation, she suffers one point of damage, and *thermal vision* can detect her at triple the normal range (180' or 270').

36) Hidden allows the mutant to hide a physical mutation (not a drawback) when it is not in use. Approximately 75% of these mutations require conscious thought to hide, while the rest will slide back into the mutant's body on their own. Very large limbs and organs may not be hidden.

37) Increased Range boosts the effective reach of a ranged mutation to five times normal.

38) Induce replaces *induce mutation*, as the mutant cause his mutation to manifest in others. The mutant cannot use the modified mutation himself, and only the affected mutation can be passed along. This modifier does not transfer with the mutation.

39) Invisible mutations cannot be detected with standard



senses — even when being used. This modifier can apply to physical mutations like *natural armor* and *spiny growth*.

40) Latent mutations are not useable when gained; it requires later exposure to some “X factor” (a substance, event, etc.) to gain access. For example, a radioactive spider bite might trigger the mutant's underlying powers. 25% of those with this modifier also have **Environmental Dependence**, so there is an initial trigger, but repeated exposure is also required in order to use the mutation after (e.g., eating spinach).

41) Limited mutations can only affect a specific group of species, materials, energy, etc. For example, a limited version of *force screen* might only defend against radiation, while a limited *chameleon epidermis* might only function in forests.

42) Mass is actually two different modifiers. In the first case, smaller, or younger mutants have a more powerful mutation: those with less than 25% of their possible hit points do double damage, affect twice as many targets, or have twice the range. In the second case, larger, or older, mutants have more powerful mutations: those with more than 75% of their possible hit points do double damage, affect twice as many targets, or have twice the range.

43) Environmental Distortion changes the mutation's effect depending on the environment it is used in. Half the time it is a bonus and half it is a penalty. Most (95%) work normally

in all but a single situation, such as energy ray (electricity) doubling or halving its range in water, including rain. The rest have d4+1 environments where they are altered. The exact alteration may be range, damage, sensory or anything else the ML and player can come up with.

44) Multiple increases area of effect or increases number of targets. For PCs, the area of effect or number affected is doubled.

45) Nanofac mutations are inheritable mutations that result from nano-mechanical activity in the flesh and blood. The nanites are destroyed when exposed to a minimum of d4+5 class radiation. Roll the needed radiation class for each mutation with this modifier. This may or may not replace the **Tech** modifier, which refers to larger implants (like cyber-eyes) that are immune to radiation.

46) Network replaces *metaconcert*. Mutants with both the same mutation and this modifier are able to work together. While this modifier may be restrictive for PCs, it will be very effective for NPC races encountered in groups.

47) Non-herited means the mutation cannot be passed along to the mutant's offspring.

48) Persistent prolongs the effects of the mutation. For PCs, the duration is doubled. If this is applied to ray powers, the modifier will allow the mutant to double the frequency of use. For example, the mutant may use the power two out of three rounds, rather than the normal one out of three.

49) Psionics were mental mutations created by the Ancients using genetic manipulation. The various genes survived the cataclysm and subsequent generations intact. Consequently, the modified mutations are three times as strong as wild mental mutations. For PCs, this increases range and damage. The mutation might also be common in some areas as the psionic mutants outbreed others, but this is a campaign specific concern.

50) Radiation Burst releases a field of energy around the mutant every time he uses the mutation. Most mutants produce d6 class radiation and might generated a field with a 10' radius.

51) Reactive mutations are automatically activated when the mutant is exposed to a certain stimulus. For example, a mutant might have a salt water stimulus for his *thermal vision*, and could be in trouble if he is underground and his canteen runs dry; a mutant with a moonlight stimulus for his *prey scent* drawback would do well to stay indoors after dark. 90% of these mutations are also **Damaging** and will harm the mutant if the mutation discharges in excess of its normal time restrictions, e.g., every round for *energy ray* (instead of the every third round limit).

52) Recharge mutations can power artifacts and restore power levels in power cells. For PCs, this adds d10 charges

to the battery. 10% of mutants can detect the cell's power level and are able to control their power to just top off the cell. The others run the risk of over-charging the power cell, and possibly causing an explosion. To prevent a PC from recharging everything in sight, a ML might limit this mutation's usage to once per day.

53) Recoil knocks the mutant over when she uses the mutation, unless already prone or otherwise unable to fall. This modifier does apply to mental mutations unless the ML rules otherwise.

54) Revolting mutations horrify the mutants who have them. The mutant must make a save versus stun in order to use the mutation. 25% of revolting mutations are also **Disgusting**.

55) Sapient mutations have their own personalities and make their own actions. There is a 90% chance for a mutation that the mutation mind is an ally to the brain; the remainder are hostile, working against the mutant and his allies (hopefully, this is not a powerful combat mutation like *spiny growth*). Drawbacks are 95% hostile.

56) Sensitive mutants can detect others who have this mutation (not just the mutation with the modifier). The range is line of sight.

57) Sloppy mutations are hard to aim. For PCs, this induces a -4 to hit penalty when using the modified mutation.

58) Slow means the mutant always acts last in the round when using this mutation.

59) Surreal does not provide a bonus or penalty to the mutation, but rather makes it memorable. Others who see the mutation in use will have a hard time forgetting the mutant. For example, a mutant with *control weather* creates a blizzard with fractal snow mounds and unnatural winds; surreal *wings* might look like blue flames variegated with green and yellow spots.

60) Surfactant reduces surface tension, making chemicals more easily absorbed and harder to remove. This modifier applies to *chemical gland*, *toxic weapon*, and similar mutations, making the saving throw more difficult. For PCs, this inflicts a -4 penalty.

61) Tech mutations are a byproduct of cyberware (things like cybernetic eyes or limbs). Removing the implant will also cause the mutation to fade.

62) Telekinetic Pull mutations, when activated, draw everything within range toward the mutant, using a Strength of 10 to determine damage. The range for PCs is 25'.

63) Telekinetic Push mutations, when activated, force everything (including the mutant's gear) away from the

mutant, using a Strength of 10 to determine damage. The range for PCs is 25'.

64) Tiring mutations fatigue the mutant. Each use adds one fatigue point (-1 to hit, +1 AC). If/when 6 fatigue points accumulate, the mutant goes unconscious. A fatigue point can be recovered with 10 minutes of rest.

65) Touch reduces ranged attacks to melee contact.

66) Transfer allows a telepath to project a mental mutation through another person, using them as a conduit. For PCs, the intermediary must be within 100', a distance unrestricted by line of sight — only, the mutant must know the other person is there. The original mutation's range measured from the conduit. Those unwilling to serve as repeater stations are allowed a save. The mutant may also use the mutation normally, without needing a middleman.

67) Transfiguration alters the appearance of the mutant. Each use of the mutation causes another, permanent change (though the changes may cycle). This alteration is purely cosmetic, but gives Charisma checks a +/-1d4 modifier per transformation.

68) Unstable warps reality. Every time the mutation is used a physical gate appears and a small plane shift takes place, with the effect lasting for one round. There is a 20% chance that something comes through the gate.

69) Unstoppable removes the saving throw to resist the mutation.

ALTERNATE MUTATION MODIFIERS

If the ML does not like some of the example modifiers in the list above, below are a few possible substitutions.

Ammo forces the mutant to drain uses from other mutants with the same mutation (though the modifier is not required). A “clip” is 6 uses, with each use referring to either the time of concentration needed for using mutations (such as *neural telepathy* and *damage turning*), or concrete uses from mutations like *energy ray*. If there are no other beings around with this mutation, then the mutant's “clip” will remain empty.

Cloud turns a chemical-based touch mutation into an area of effect attack surrounding the mutant. It can not be turned off and on like a field, but rather a volume of the chemical is released that remains for a set duration, which may or may not be altered by prevailing weather conditions. For PCs, clouds usually last for 6 rounds and can be released 3 times per day. The cloud is 30' in diameter unless there is a wind, which will deform it. The chemicals do not discriminate between friend and foe, so care should be exercised when using this mutation.

Cycling mutations are part of regular set that rotates daily



(or whatever time unit the ML prefers — round, week, month, etc.). The groups number d4+1, with additional mutations rolled when this modifier is gained. As an example, a mutant has *energy ray*, *spiny growth*, and *toxic weapon*. *Energy ray* is determined to be modified by cycling, so a set of rotating mutations is rolled, coming up with *force screen* and *chameleon epidermis*. On Monday, our mutant has *energy ray*; on Tuesday *force screen* becomes available; Wednesday it is *chameleon epidermis*; Thursday is back to *energy ray*, and so on. But all week the mutant has *spiny growth* and *toxic weapon*.

Field converts a “beam attack” power — either energy-based or mental — into an area of effect centered on the mutant, which can be turned off and on. For PCs, this attack can be used three times per day and lasts for up to 5 rounds for each use.

Fluctuating mutations have a power level that changes from day to day, or encounter to encounter (ML's pick). During each time unit, the player must roll a d10. On a 1-3, the mutation effect is halved; on a 4-6, the mutation is normal; on a 7-10, the mutation is twice as strong.

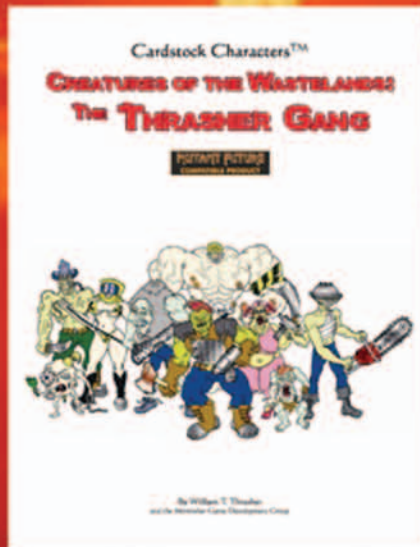
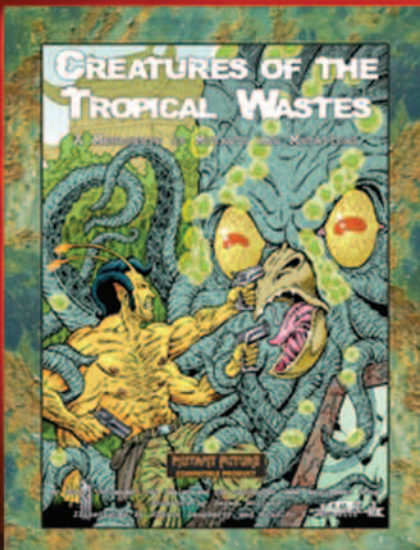
Genetic Lock makes the mutant sterile except when breeding with others with this mutation and modifier.

Infectious allows the mutant to spread this mutation like a disease, and the mutant cannot make a conscious choice on giving the mutation or not (unlike **Induce**). Possible methods of transmission include blood to blood contact, sex, or consumption (i.e., part or all of the mutant must be eaten). The victim must save versus poison to avoid the effect. This modifier is in the “slush pile” because of its possible campaign-altering effect: dozens of infectious mutations could destroy a game.

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