

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #2: Monsters That Improve with Age



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Like a fine wine, some monsters improve with age, and it is to them that this second thematic issue of *Wisdom from the Wastelands* is devoted! This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The rules contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the "Basic" system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).

An age chart can be a wonderful tool for Game Masters who want to scale monster encounters so that they are commensurate with the powers and artifacts possessed by the player characters. A chart of this sort is made up of three columns, one each for the age of a creature, its hit dice, and notes. Notes include damage, mutations, drawbacks, and anything else that affects the creature in or out of combat.

There are a few alternate forms for these charts. Most have Hit Dice that increase by one per age level, a few do not. Some have hit dice that constantly increase, and some decrease after a certain level to represent the weaknesses of aging (I call these "elder age" charts). Some creatures can have multiple age charts, which represents changes in diet, habitat, proximity of other specific creatures, or exposure to certain elements, such as heat or radiation. In most cases, once a creature has started its path down one chart, it is restricted to that chart for its entire life. In rare cases a mutant can change growth charts but this means they have to survive exposure to an extreme of something, which could include radiation, chemicals, parasites, or disease. And, finally, there are those mutants that go through metamorphosis and have one or more age charts (e.g., a larval form might have one age chart and the adult form another).

A number of examples follow.

Standard Age Chart

Grape Mass

No. Enc.:	0 (2d12)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	0'
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	See chart
Attacks:	1 (vine)
Damage:	See chart
Save:	L (1/2 HD)
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	See chart

These plants have taken the strangler fig lifestyle to an extreme. Separate Grape Vines grow denser and denser to the point where they strangle trees, envelope structures, and cover city blocks. Eventually, they fuse into tree-like forms and the trees then fuse into a mass. Each mass can have as many as two dozen trunks and cover a square mile or more.



See the chart below for the mutations they gain as they age. The length of their vines, and later their branches, is one foot per hit die, to a maximum of 20'. When engulfing a building, the vines and branches do grow into rooms with sunlight and thus a mass can reach into shaded areas if attacking. As the masses grow larger, their weight increases to the point where all but the strongest structures will collapse. As the only creatures the masses do not attack are those less than a pound, the covered landscape is excluded from human habitation and home to many tiny creatures. The fruit they produce is popular with birds, and some intelligent bird and

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insect mutants barter them with human populations for artifacts that can aid in their survival and comfort. So far the only known limitations on their growth are climate — they do not reach mountain tops or invade deserts — and salt

water. Although they are subject to being eaten by herbivores, the adult vines are just too powerful to be consumed by any but the largest creatures.

Mutations: *natural vegetal weapon, special.*

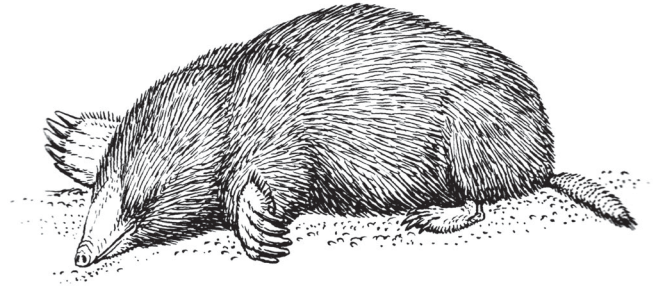
Age (Years)	Hit Dice	Notes
0-1	2	One natural vegetal weapon (d4 damage), HC VI
2-5	3	Two natural vegetal weapons (d4 damage), HC VII
6-10	4	Vine damage increases to d6/d6, HC XII, XIII
11-20	8	Gains <i>grenade-like fruit</i> , vine damage increases to d8/d8, HC XII, XIII
21-50	12	Fruit damage increases to 3d6, four natural vegetal weapons (d8 damage), HC XVIII
51-100	20	This is when the vines fuse into trees, the four vine attacks become eight branch attacks (d10 damage) and they gain one more grenade-like fruit attack (two total), HC XVIII
101-500	20 per trunk	Trees fuse into a mass, number of attacks is dependent on number of trunks, HC XV, XVIII, XXII
501+	20 per trunk	Masses start to fuse at this point, the whole can cover square miles, HC XV, XVIII, XXII (X number of masses)

Variant Age Chart

Lazra

No. Enc.:	d4 (2d6)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	90' (30')
	Burrow 30' (10')
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	See chart
Attacks:	2 (claws)
Damage:	See chart
Save:	L (1/2 HD)
Morale:	5
Hoard Class:	VI

Lazra are asymmetrical mutant moles that hunt on the surface and sleep underground. The males' right paws and the females' left paws are much larger than their other paws. Both sexes fight for mating rights and it is not unheard of for the loser to be disemboweled. Lazra can grow to the size of large dogs. They feed on insects and other small creatures that live on and just under the soil surface and find them by scent. They dwell in hollow trees and stream banks in small groups for defense. There is always a guard by the entrance and any non-Lazra attempting to get in will be viciously attacked. Young are born in mid-summer and leave the nest after a year, looking to find their other groups to live with and to ensure inbreeding does not occur. The eldest Lazra



collect static electricity and zap creatures they come into contact with. One of the only reasons people pay attention to Lazra is their tendency to cause minor landslides by burrowing, which can cause all manner of trouble. There is also the fact that their pelts are waterproof, and some aquatic people pay good money for Lazra pelts as they can be used, among other things, to make air filled containers to hold artifacts damaged by excessive moisture. Pelts cannot be from the eldest individuals, however, because of an ability to collect and discharge electricity that may short out electronics (but which is not powerful enough to be adapted into weapons).

Mutations: *aberrant form (natural attack), bizarre appearance, gigantism, natural armor, vision impairment.*

Age (Months)	Hit Dice	Notes
0-4	2	Claws do d3/d2 points of damage
5-8	2+4	Movement increases to 120' (40'), burrow 60' (20')
9-12	3	Claws do d6/d3 points of damage
13-16	3+4	Armor Class decreases to 5, becomes an adult
17-20	4	Claws do d8/d4 points of damage
21+	4+4	Burrow increases to 90' (30'), gains <i>energy-retaining cell structure</i>

Multiple Age Charts

Giant Green Crayfish

No. Enc.:	d8 (5d10+20)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	180' (60') Swim 90' (30')
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	See charts
Attacks:	3 (2 claws and variable)
Damage:	See charts
Save:	L (1/2 HD)
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	XII

The Giant Green Crayfish is a eusocial animal (i.e., it has an ant- or termite-like social structure). This mutant is restricted to forests and creates hives within and beneath living trees, keeping the host tree alive by secreting chemicals that stimulate growth. The trees not only grow faster but they also flood their heartwood with water as a reaction to the chemical excretions. Unlike insects, crustaceans grow throughout their adult lives and the Giant Green Crayfish is no exception.

There are four known castes. The young workers and soldiers are kept together for the first week of their lives and most people cannot tell them apart. Warriors are an offshoot of the soldier and, although cannibalism is uncommon except in times of extreme hunger, reproductives are kept apart, as they are too rare to risk the chance the other young might consume them (and in times of famine soldiers will consume workers, especially to protect the reproductive).

Workers grow up to eight feet in length and to as much as 150 pounds. It collects plant and animal material from the surrounding area to feed the whole colony. Using water produced by the trees under which they live, the workers are able to turn the soil around the hive into a thin mud that allows its members to swim through the soil and yet still keeps the surrounding trees immobile. Any creature walking onto the mud will immediately sink and could possibly drown.



In addition to their claws, the workers have tail fins that can be used for defense. About 75% of the members of a colony are workers.

Soldiers are basic protectors of the colony. They grow up to 10 feet in length and up to 200 pounds. Soldiers use their poisonous claws and nasty bites to rend flesh from bone. If their poison does not kill an intruder, a combination of bite and claw will usually do the trick. There are always a few soldiers stationed at the various entrances to a colony. About 20% of the members of a colony are soldiers.

Warriors only appear if the hive is about to be overrun. They are older soldiers that go through an amazing growth spurt, one that takes 3d4 minutes and will kill them in a matter of hours. The change is triggered when the water is full of blood and hormones. The largest warriors are up to 20 feet in length and weigh as much as 500 pounds. In addition to their claws and bites, warriors also possess the mental mutation *telekinesis*. They use this mutation to trip or capture opponents (save versus stun or fall, or be immobilized if already prone). Warriors are not normally found in colonies.

Reproductives are kings and queens. Each can reach up to 15 feet in length and weigh up to 275 pounds. A large colony will contain several pairs. These creatures are more lethal than soldiers and possess a massive growth of spines, which they can remove and throw at targets up to 50' distant. This ranged attack is in addition to their claws. Despite being kings and queens, these creatures are not intelligent and do not have any control over the hive and the other castes. If one is slain, more reproductives can be created by elder workers undergoing a metamorphosis, triggered by the lack of pheromones from the slain reproductive. All the potential reproductives transform quickly, taking three days to do so. Once the metamorphosis is complete, the reproductives start producing eggs and larvae to replace any losses that have occurred. Usually, only 5% of a colony are reproductives. If a colony suffered a loss of its reproductives and many of its workers and warriors, then this number might be anywhere from 1% to 80%, as the eldest of the remaining workers transform.

Mutations: *gigantism, natural armor, special.*

Worker

Age (Weeks)	Hit Dice	Notes
1-4	2	Claws do d4 each, tail does d4
5-8	3	Claws do d6 each, swim movement rate increases to 120' (40')
9-12	4	Claws do d6+1 each, AC decreases to 5
13-16	5	Claws do d8 each, tail does d6
17+	6	Claws do d8+2 each, tail does d6+1, can become reproductives

Soldier

Age (Weeks)	Hit Dice	Notes
1-4	4	Claws do d6 each, bite does d8, gains <i>toxic weapon</i> (poison class 4)
5-8	5	Claws do d8 each, poison class 5, AC decreases to 5
9-12	6	Claws do d10 each, poison class 6, AC decreases to 4
13-16	7	Claws do d10+1 each, bite does d10, poison class 7
17-20	8	Claws do d12 each, poison class 8, AC decreases to 3, can become warrior
21+	9	Claws do d12+2 each, poison class 12

Warrior

Age (Hours)	Hit Dice	Notes
0-1	10	Claws do 4d4 each, bite does d12+2, poison class 12, AC decreases to 2, gains <i>neural telekinesis</i>
2-3	12	Claws do 5d4 each, bite does 3d6, poison class 14, AC decreases to 1
4-5	14	Claws do 5d6 each, bite does 3d6+4, AC decreases to 0, penalty to save of <i>neural telekinesis</i> is -4
6-7	16	Claws do 5d8 each, bite does 3d8+4, AC decreases to -2
8	N/A	Dead

Reproductive

Age (Weeks)	Hit Dice	Notes
1-6	7	Claws do d8 each, spines do d10, AC decreases to 4
7-12	8	Claws do d10 each, AC decreases to 2
13-18	9	Claws do 3d4 each, spines do d12 each, AC decreases to 0
19+	10	Claws do 3d6 each, spines do 3d6 each, AC decreases to -2

Metamorphic Age Chart

Dekodec Larva

No. Enc.:	0 (3d4)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement:	60' (20')
Armor Class:	8
Hit Dice:	See chart
Attacks:	2 (tentacles)
Damage:	See chart
Save:	L (1/2 HD)
Morale:	4
Hoard Class:	None

Dekodecs are extremely mutated giant ants. Their grubs have proto antennae that give them excellent senses of touch and smell. They have no eyes, legs, or wings but do have a pair of five-foot-long tentacles that emerge from their abdomens and are used to rend prey. The grubs are never found outside a colony unless taken by a predator or person wanting an unusual pet. Adults will abandon their offspring if the colony is attacked by overwhelming forces, something that keeps their population down. As the larvae grow, they gain toxic



spines on their tentacles that inject a class 11 poison meant to subdue larger and larger prey. They also gain the ability to fly psionically, just before they transform, and the *density alteration (others)* mutation, which is used in self defense. This is actually quite handy underground, as creatures attacking the larva can be made so large that they cannot move through the tunnel or chamber.

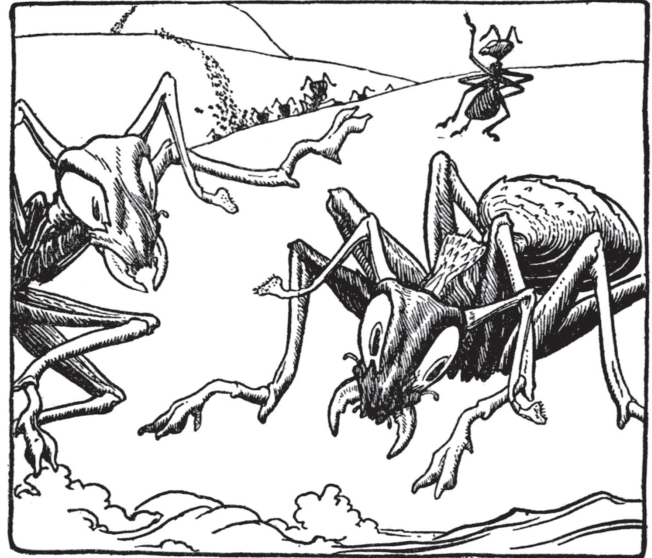
Mutations: *aberrant form (extra body parts, natural weapon), gigantism, increases sense (smell, touch).*

Age (Weeks)	Hit Dice	Notes
0-1	1	Damage d4/d4
2-3	2	Tentacles grow to 10 feet length
4-5	3	Damage d6/d6, gains <i>toxic weapon</i>
6-7	4	Gains psionic flight, fly movement rate is 90' (30'), gains <i>density alteration (others)</i>
8+	N/A	Transforms into adult

Dekodec Adult

No. Enc.:	d4 (d6)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	120' (40')
	Fly 150' (50')
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	See chart
Attacks:	1 (bite)
Damage:	See chart
Save:	L (1/2 HD) +1
Morale:	4
Hoard Class:	XII

Unlike most insects, Dekodecs do continue to grow after becoming adults. They replaced their wings with *psionic flight* and this has made such growth possible. Initially, they look like giant ants but change significantly over time and grow horns and jumping legs, and gain the abilities to project a caustic adhesive from their abdomen and make telekinetic attacks. This spit does d8 points of damage the first round, d6 the second, and d4 the third; it also acts like strength 16 glue until it wears off (in four rounds). The organ that produces this acidic glue is a massive horn that grows from behind the head. The telekinetic attack forces the opponent to save versus stun or be held down. The adult cannot attack a creature it is holding, due to the need for concentration, but another Dekodec or creature can. The only reason that Dekodec colonies are so small is their constant retreat and abandonment of their larvae when facing difficult odds. However, this also allows them to survive in cases when giant



ants would be exterminated, as they quickly set up new colonies 10 to 50 miles away.

A close cousin has the ability to produce silk that acts like a gill. It has taken to the water and swims with its telekinesis. Other than having an increased ability to resist drowning (triple standard time), they are identical to normal Dekodecs.

Mutations: *aberrant form (extra body parts)*, *density alteration (others)*, *gigantism*, *increased sense (smell, touch)*, *psionic flight*.

Age (Months)	Hit Dice	Notes
0-2	3	Bite does d6
3-5	4	Gains <i>aberrant form</i> (natural attack), horns do d8 points of damage
6-8	5	Bite does d8, horns do d12, AC decreases to 4
9-11	6	Gains caustic spit, gains <i>bizarre appearance</i>
12-15	7	Bite does d10, horn does 3d4+2, gains telekinetic attack
16	N/A	Dead from natural causes

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Skirmisher Publishing LLC has got a section of its website dedicated to material for *Mutant Future* and other post-apocalyptic games in general and content tying in with this publication in particular. This gives readers the opportunity to obtain free bonus content, post their own material, and comment on this publication and Skirmisher's support for the genres it covers overall.

Content recently posted includes an example of another creature with Multiple Age Charts, the Chitter, a giant mutant squirrel that it has several forms. We have provided full stats for the Forest, Plains, and Ruins Chitterers — and will post the best stats and descriptions provided by readers for the hulking Water Chitterer!

Just go to <http://skirmisher.com/forum/38> for more.

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