

MYRMIDON BIOLOGY

Description

Myrmidon physiology varies enormously between hives; there is less similitude between myrmidons of two different hives than there is between, for instance, humans and mokosh. Some myrmidons have four limbs, some have six; some have vestigial wings beneath a carapace shell. Most have short, taloned claws which serve as hands, but the inhabitants of some hives have much larger claws, or even pincers, which make fine work almost impossible but are effective as weapons. Some have antennae or faceted eyes, others have mammalian eyes. Many, but not all, have powerful mandibles. Shell colouration varies considerably, brilliant yellow and red hues are common, but so are black and dark green.

Nonetheless, all myrmidons have several features in common. They have no hard bones; instead their bodies are covered by a hard chitinous exoskeleton which protects their inner organs. Myrmidons reproduce asexually; each hive has a single queen who lays scores of eggs each winter that hatch out in spring. Every myrmidon is capable of producing chist, a hard resinous substance made by chewing wood between teeth or mandibles and mixing the resulting pulp with their acidic spittle. This forms a thick paste which hardens as it sets to resemble black stone.

There are in fact three different kinds of myrmidons; warriors, drones and the queen. Warriors are fully sentient creatures; drones are physically identical but are nonsentient and must be controlled by the queen or the warriors. Both warriors and drones grow at an astonishing speed and are mature and fully grown by the start of spring, just three months after the infant larvae hatch. Warriors can live for as long as thirty years, but all drones die at the onset of winter and never survive more than nine months from hatching.

The queen is massive, the size of a fully grown dragon. No myrmidon is ever born as a queen, but if the queen of a hive dies, then one of the remaining warriors will transform into a new queen over the following months. The new queen retains all the memories and personality of the warrior; it is only her physiology that changes. Queens typically live for twenty years.

It is easy to think of the queen as female and the warriors as male, but in fact the distinction is a false one, only the queen lays eggs and her eggs do not require fertilization.

Each egg requires a host, a body to hatch from. There is no limit to the number of eggs a mature queen can produce and they will all hatch as long as there is sufficient meat for the eggs to consume as the immature larvae grow. To guarantee survival each egg must be placed in a substantial piece of red meat and stored in a breeding chamber. The chamber is a large pool which usually contains about fifty receptacles for the host's meat. The pools are filled with sticky, slightly acidic, spittle exuded by the queen that prevents the meat from decaying for up to a year or more.

The quality of the host is critical to the success of the hive. Any red meat will do, but any larvae that are fed on the body of a non-sentient, such as an animal or another drone, will grow into drones. The only way for a queen to produce more warriors is to implant her eggs in the body of a sentient creature such as an ophidian or a myrmidon warrior. Almost all successful myrmidon hives practice ritual cannibalism of their own dead warriors and the only way for a hive to expand the number of warriors is to acquire the bodies of sentient beings to plant their eggs in.

Each hive occupies a large area of territory which is farmed for ophidian bodies to increase the warrior population. Dietary habits do not vary much between hives. The occupants of most hives eat only meat, but some consume small amounts of fruit, vegetables and nuts. No myrmidon can survive without regular consumption

of fresh meat. In some hives, the drones create large holding pens made of chist, where herds of animals are kept. Even so, the drones must collect vast amounts of foodstuff for the animals in the pens which is obtained through foraging. As a result the absolute limit of this territory is the range that the drones can reach and return from within the space of their lifetime of nine months. In practice, no hive in modern times covers such a wide area.

Although the queen is the focus of the hive, she is easy to replace and the health of a hive is really determined by the number of warriors present. In some hives the queen is socially dominant but this model is not universal. When the numbers of warriors in the hive has increased to a suitably safe level, some will set out to try to found a new hive nearby. This requires a large expenditure by the initial hive, as the new hive will take many months to build and a new breeding chamber must first be constructed. All the members of the new hive remain physically identical to the old hive, until one of them mutates into a new queen.

Racial rules

- You should not pass these rules on to other players

Please note that the following rules have not been released to the general player base and are only given to those players playing, or intending to play, myrmidon characters. The Maelstrom campaign is enhanced if players are able to discover information about the game through purely IC sources so we ask players not to pass these sheets to other players. We believe that some of the advantages available to you will be lost if these rules become widely known.

No bones

- You begin with two body hits rather than three

All myrmidon characters have a chitinous exoskeleton rather than bones and as a result they are particularly susceptible to any weapon which breaches their chitinous skeleton. You begin the game with two body hits rather than three, one less than normal. Myrmidon characters may increase their body hits by buying endurance or great endurance as normal.

Claws

- You may have claws

If you have suitable, weapon safe, phys-reps for claws may use them to call SINGLE in combat. The rules for using claws are described in chapter four of the Event Rules.

Strong mandibles

- You are capable of destroying a body in five minutes

All myrmidon spit is sticky and caustic. You can use your spit and powerful mandibles to rapidly reducing a body to an unrecognizable state within a few minutes. You will receive a show-me lammy to allow you to use this ability at an event. You should show this lammy to any player who is roleplaying their corpse whose body you wish to destroy. The player will give you their body card.

After you use your acidic spit to preserve a body you are left with a disfigured haunch of encrusted flesh suitable for acting as a host. If you hand in the body card at GOD during the event, then it will be placed in your inventory for use during downtime.

A normal body will rot so you cannot just put a body card in your hand-in baggy at the end of the event.

Natural armour

- You have three points of natural armour
- Natural armour stacks with normal armour
- Natural armour cannot be healed with normal magic
- You may increase the thickness of your natural armour in downtime

All myrmidon characters have a tough chitinous exoskeleton which protects them from harm. You receive the equivalent of three armour points. The protection provided by natural armour stacks with that provided by normal armour. If you are wearing armour then you have a number of armour hits equal to the armour value of the armour plus the three natural armour points. Normal armour points are always lost before natural armour points.

Natural armour can not be restored using any ability that restores armour unless it explicitly states that it will heal natural armour. Natural armour is regained at the rate of one point per week by a dragon on full body hits.

You may spend time in downtime training to improve the physical protection provided by your natural armour.

Chist

- You can make standard items from chist
- You can make special items and buildings from chist if you have the work chist skill

All myrmidon characters can produce chist and can make simply objects. You may assume that your character has made any standard item you have a phys-rep for from chist if you wish. To make complex crafted objects you will need the work chist skill. This skill allows you to produce special items out of chist, such as weapons and armour as well as buildings. Chist is very dense and heavy and does not float. Although chist is not flexible enough to make bows it is superior to wood in virtually every other way. If you purchase work wood for your character at character creation then you will be given work chist instead.

Queen transformation

- You may begin play as a myrmidon queen
- You may transform into a queen between events

If no player is currently playing the queen of your hive, then any character in the hive may opt to mutate into a new queen (we assume that the current non-player character queen dies). This process takes a period of a few months and requires your entire downtime to complete. The minimum phys-rep for a myrmidon queen is a fifteen foot long, full body myrmidon costume covered in chitinous plates. You may vary from these phys-rep requirements following the rules for phys-repping your race described in step two of Character Creation. Other than the size requirement and the chitinous appearance the queen may look like anything you wish. If you are pre-booking as a new myrmidon group then one player may request to play a myrmidon queen.

Secondary characters cannot play myrmidon queens.

MYRMIDON QUEEN BIOLOGY

Giant body

- You have four body hits instead of two
- You have six natural armour points instead of three

The large physical size of a myrmidon queen gives her substantially increased toughness. A myrmidon queen has four basic body hits and six natural armour hits. You may increase your body hits by learning endurance or train to improve the physical protection provided by your natural armour as normal.

Acidic Spit

- You can spit acid in combat
- You may improve the damage caused by your acidic spit in downtime

All myrmidon queens are capable of spitting acid at any character within five metres a maximum of once every thirty seconds. This attack follows all the normal rules for ranged damage and special attacks described in chapter four of the Event Rules. You may call ACID SPIT DOUBLE or ACID SPIT SINGLE THROUGH.

You may spend time in downtime working to improve the damage caused by your acidic spit. This ability is only available to myrmidon queens.

Enhanced Eggs

- You may enhance the quality of the eggs you lay in downtime
- New primary characters gain the advantages provided by your enhanced eggs

All queens are capable of laying hundreds of eggs every winter. The only limits on the number of eggs that you can produce are the number of hosts that the hive can procure and the size of your breeding chambers.

All drones begin as zero point characters with two body hits, three natural armour hits and can call SINGLE. They can never acquire new skills. You can learn to lay enhanced eggs, thereby improving the physical characteristics of the newly hatched members of the hive. Drones and warriors that hatch from enhanced eggs may have more body hits, more natural armour points and more powerful claws. All new player characters from that hive automatically gain the benefits of the enhanced egg abilities of the queen. This ability is only available to myrmidon queens.

The benefits of enhanced eggs affect new primary myrmidon characters, their retainers and all drones and warrior men-at-arms. Secondary characters do not receive this benefit.