

# OPHIDIAN BIOLOGY

## Description

Ophidians tend to be slightly thinner and shorter than humans, although the strongest and most powerful of their number can match a human in height and build. Ophidians have very flat features, many have noses that are little more than two breathing holes set into the front of their face. Some ophidians have large hoods of skin which run around the side of the face, and all have large, accentuated fangs, although in some instances these are hinged, and fold back into the mouth so as to become almost invisible externally. Their fangs are linked to their poison sacs, allowing them to kill with a single bite.

All ophidians are able to naturally produce a powerful poison from glands in their mouth. An ophidian bite can inject enough venom to kill a small creature relatively quickly. The bite is ineffective against large or armoured creatures. However, ophidian venom is sufficiently sticky that it can be used to coat a weapon and if used in large doses then it is strong enough to kill a single weak target, such as a myrmidon or a human, within eight hours. During this time, the victim steadily weakens, suffering muscle pains which grow steadily worse until they are no longer able to breathe and they suffocate. Most ophidians have developed methods and skills to improve the quantity and toxicity of their venom with practice.

Ophidian skin, although scaled, is very supple. The size of the scales and their colouring varies between different families but even the largest are still extremely flexible and quite sensitive. This gives the ophidian an excellent sense of touch, but has the unfortunate effect that the scales provide little or no protection.

Despite being oviparous and appearing reptilian, ophidians are warm blooded and feed their young with "milk" produced by females. Their eggs are soft and leathery and rather than leave them clutched in a nest of any sort the mother carries the egg with her. Only one egg is ever laid at a time, whereupon it is transferred to the pouch of the female (located on the belly, male ophidians have vestigial pouches), where it is carried until it hatches. A fertilized egg is laid five months after intercourse, with the young ophidian hatching some two months later.

Ophidian young are totally reliant on their mother, and her milk, for the first year of their life. The cry of an ophidian newborn seems to reach deep into the instincts of the adults, who often find they react to it without thought, with the fear cry being known to send those around it into a frenzy. The young are considered mature after about fourteen years, when they become fertile. Reports of births where parents are in their fifties exist, however most females cease to produce viable eggs in their forties. Most ophidians eat anything, as food can be scarce in bad times, but they prefer red meat, well-hung. The Onontakha diet heavily features smoked meat and raw vegetables, with exotic items such as insect larvae and offal being considered a great treat.

## 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, ophidian 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.

## Ophidian Biology

- You are affected differently by some substances
- You must show any rip-open lammy to a referee if it has a substance code beginning with D written inside

Your unusual biology means that you are affected differently by some drugs and preparations. All rip-open lammies have a two digit code written inside the lammy. Any substances beginning with a 'D' code will have a different effect on your character. You must ignore the written effect, and show the lammy to a referee within the next 30 minutes.

## Poison sacs

- You can produce a single dose of blade venom every event
- Your venom will expire at the end of the event

All ophidian primary characters can secrete a powerful sticky venom. You will receive a poison lammy to represent this ability at the start of each event that you attend and the lammy represents the venom contained in your poison sacs. The poison is only effective if used during the season you gained it in, but it is replenished every season. You may not trade the lammy representing this ability to another character unopened and only you may open the lammy, as the poison must directly be applied from your character's fangs. The poison may not be stored without an additional lammy allowing this.

Ophidian venom is a blade venom that you must apply to a weapon. It will only have an effect if the weapon causes at least one body hit of damage the first time you strike an opponent within ten minutes of applying the venom. If the weapon is not used within ten minutes or the blow is stopped by armour then the poison has no effect. The venom follows the normal rules for poison described in chapter four in the Event Rules. If the lammy is opened and the venom not applied to a weapon that it very quickly becomes inert and useless.

This ability is only available to primary ophidian characters, their retainers and men-at-arms. Secondary characters do not receive this benefit.

## Master of poison

- You may learn to improve the toxicity and quantity of your poison

Ophidian primary characters may spend time between events learning to improve the toxicity and quantity of your poison. This will make your poisons harder to resist and allow you to use them more often at events.

This ability is only available to primary ophidian characters and their retainers. Secondary characters and men-at-arms do not receive this benefit.