

BEAST MASTER RANGER SPELL-LESS VARIANT

This is a variant for players who like the concept of a ranger character with a big furry companion that is durable, rideable and independent. Examples from fiction and media include: Mowgli and Baloo (*The Jungle Book*). Lyra and Iorek Byrnison (*The Golden Compass / Northern Lights*). Neytiri and the thanator (*James Cameron's Avatar*). Beast Hunters in the *World of Warcraft*.

This variant is for 3rd level characters, and entails the following changes:

1. NO SPELLCASTING

Lose the Spellcasting trait.

2. BEAST COMPANION

Choose a beast of CR 1/4 or less as normal, except its size is increased to Large and its Hit Dice are d10s. **At your GM's discretion, when you reach 5th level as a ranger, you may upgrade its stats to a CR 1/2 beast like the black bear. When you reach 9th level, you may upgrade its stats to a CR 1 beast like the brown bear.**

You can command your Beast Companion without using any of your actions of any kind.

Its hit points equal the hit points of the beast's stat block or 1/2 your hit points (rounded down), whichever is greater.

3. HERBALISM

Gain proficiency with the herbalism kit.

4. PRIMEVAL AWARENESS

Primeval Awareness requires a short rest to recharge (instead of requiring expending spell slots). It lasts for 1 minute. At 5th level it lasts for 2 minutes, at 9th level for 3 minutes, at 13th level for 4 minutes, and at 17th level for 5 minutes.

5. REPLACE "EXCEPTIONAL TRAINING" @7TH WITH...

STRIDER

When you roll initiative, and are aware of a threat and are not surprised, you gain a special turn that takes place before other creatures can act. On this turn, either you or your beast companion can take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

6. SHARE SPELLS @15TH

Beginning at 15th level, when a curative or buffing spell is cast upon you, it also affects your beast companion if the beast is within 30 feet of you.

DESIGN NOTES

- Ranger Spellcasting provides four kinds of spells: (1) combat potency, (2) healing/restoration, (3) some combat control, and (4) exploration utility.
- The improved Beast Companion definitely provides combat potency.
- The Beast Companion's hit points - improved by an amount roughly equivalent to a casting of *cure wounds* & given d10's for Hit Dice - coupled with the herbalism proficiency (which allows creating *potions of healing*) provides healing/restoration power.
- The Large size of the beast with its own reactions provides some combat control similar to *entangle*.
- This spell-less version suffers in terms of exploration utility, though the ability of the beast companion to act completely independently does provide some exploration options.

COMPANIONS WITH MULTIATTACK

The **bolded text** is intended for players wanting a giant badger companion (with multiattack). After mathematical wizardry with spreadsheets, I've found that Multiattack is actually *less* valuable toward dealing reliable damage than something like the wolf's Pack Attack. Because of this, it makes sense to improve a giant badger to a black bear at 5th level, and a brown bear at 9th or 11th level. This will put the damage at higher levels a little above the hunter ranger (by about 4-6 points).