

HEALING DOG

A creature for Testament campaigns, provided by www.Codicil.info



HEALING DOG

Small Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (6 hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)

Attacks: Bite +2 melee

Damage: Bite 1d4+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft.

Special Abilities: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +1 (+8 racial bonus when tracking by scent)

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organization: Pack (5–12)

Challenge Rating: 1/3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: None

Day and night, healing dogs freely wander the grounds of temples dedicated to gods of healing. The dogs lick the wounds of suppliants who have come in search of healing, and thus speed the healing process. Except for their healing ability, healing dogs are identical in all respects to normal dogs of their breed (the Middle Eastern pariah dog, forebear of the 20th-century CE Canaan dog).

Spell-like Abilities: By licking a suppliant's wounds for fifteen minutes, a healing dog can cast *cure light wounds* once per day as a 1st-level cleric. Puppies can only cure 1d4 points of damage in this fashion.

BREEDING HEALING DOGS

Healing dogs should normally be encountered only within the precincts of a temple dedicated to a Healing domain deity. Functionaries in these temples breed and train the dogs. GMs might allow PCs to learn how to breed and train healing dogs, but should carefully limit this to avoid abuse.

When a healing dog has a litter of puppies, the appropriate personnel within the temple complex examine the litter to determine which puppies are likely to survive. Those not chosen are turned out to the street, or given away to herders. Those retained by the temple are consecrated in a special ceremony in which they receive their healing abilities.

Consecrating a healing dog is similar to crafting a wondrous item. The consecrator must have 5 ranks of the Handle Animal skill, must be cleric with the Healing domain, and must be able to cast *cure light wounds*. Performing the ritual correctly requires a day of preparation time, about an hour plus five minutes per puppy to perform



Drawing of a spotted dog, from the tombs at Beni-Hassan in Egypt (c. 2200–2000 BCE).

the ceremony, may involve an animal sacrifice (depending on the deity), and costs the consecrator 40 XP per puppy consecrated.

FEES

Temples do not offer the services of healing dogs for free. Recipients of the dogs' healing are expected to make an appropriate donation to the temple. Individuals who fail to offer an appropriate gift would certainly not be welcome to return and might even be cursed in some fashion (perhaps by subtraction of the hit points the dog had healed, as if the non-paying suppliant had been targeted by an *inflict light wounds* spell at CL 1).

PIETY

Receiving a cure from a healing dog and making the expected gift are sins for Israelites, according to Deuteronomy 23:18 ("You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the Lord your God." An Israelite who receives healing from a healing dog suffers a –2 piety loss; paying the dog's fee results in a separate –1 piety loss.

DEITIES ASSOCIATED WITH HEALING DOGS

𒌷𒍪 (LESSER GODDESS)

Culture: Mesopotamian (especially Sumerian and Old Babylonian)

Alignment: NG

Domains: Good, Healing, Luck, Protection

Typical Worshipers: doctors, midwives, and anyone in need of healing

Gula (called Nin'insina by the Sumerians) was the local goddess of Isin. Her main sphere of influence was healing. Healing dogs were such an important part of her temple that the facility was sometimes called "the dog house" (E-ur-gi-ra).

As a goddess of healing, Gula had no holy weapon. Her holy animal was the dog.

Gula's teraphs grant a +2 competence bonus to all Heal checks. *Caster level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Teraphim, caster must have 5 ranks of the Heal skill; *Market Price:* 80 gp; *Weight:* 1–5 lb.

MUKOL

Culture: Canaanite (Phoenician)

Alignment: N

Domains: Death, Healing, Pestilence, Thunder

Typical Worshipers: assassins, doctors, healers

Also known as Resheph-Mukol, this bipolar deity was associated both with the infliction and the revocation of disease. As such, he was feared as a plague god but worshiped as a healing god. As his compound name implies, his fearsome aspect was associated with the Canaanite plague god Resheph.

Mukol's holy weapon was the bow. His holy animals were the dog and the gazelle.

Mukol's teraphs grant a +2 competence bonus to all Heal checks. *Caster level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Teraphim, caster must have 5 ranks of the Heal skill; *Market Price:* 80 gp; *Weight:* 1–5 lb.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The ruins of Persian-era Ashkelon yielded a surprise the excavators had not expected: hundreds of dog skeletons, carefully buried beneath the remains of a warehouse. Intrigued, the excavators began to wonder why so many dogs were buried in Ashkelon.

A small plaque from mid-fifth-century Kition gave the excavators a clue. This plaque listed a variety of personnel serving in a temple dedicated to Astarte and an otherwise little-known god named Mukol. The list of cultic functionaries included the expected roles — but also dogs and puppies. In some way, dogs and puppies were "on staff" at Mukol's temple. Moreover, the Kition plaque lists fees associated with receipt of the dogs' and puppies' services. The plaque does not, however, specify what those services were.

The character of the god Mukol provided another clue. At Idalion on Cyprus, Mukol was known as Resheph-Mukol, and equated with the Greek god Apollo-Amuklos. This information helped

interpreters identify Mukol with Resheph. Resheph is commonly considered a plague god, but in the form Resheph-Mukol, he seems to be a bipolar god associated with both causing illness and healing illnesses.

Mukol's association with dogs was strengthened by a carving from Late Bronze Age Beth-Shean. In one carving, the god Mukol sits on a throne, wearing a horned helmet (the gazelle was one of Resheph's holy animals). In another two-panel carving, a dog fights with a lion in the first panel, apparently gaining victory in the second panel.

Far away from Ashkelon and Cyprus, at Nippur, excavators found a temple dedicated to Gula, goddess of healing. Twenty miles south of Nippur, at Isin, worshipers deposited in Gula's temple there plaques and figurines depicting dogs. Moreover, worshipers had buried over thirty dogs in the ramp leading up to Gula's temple at Isin. Gula's holy animal was the dog, and her temple was called the "Dog House."

Ashkelon excavator Lawrence Stager surmised that the dogs played some sort of role in the healing cults at these temples. In the Greek temple of Asklepios, a healing god, patients lay in the dark hoping to be visited by the dogs and snakes that inhabited the premises. Stager concluded that the dogs at Ashkelon and Isin somehow participated in healing rituals there as well. Since the Ashkelon and Isin dog burials are separated by some 500 years and many miles, this may have been a more widespread association than previously suspected.

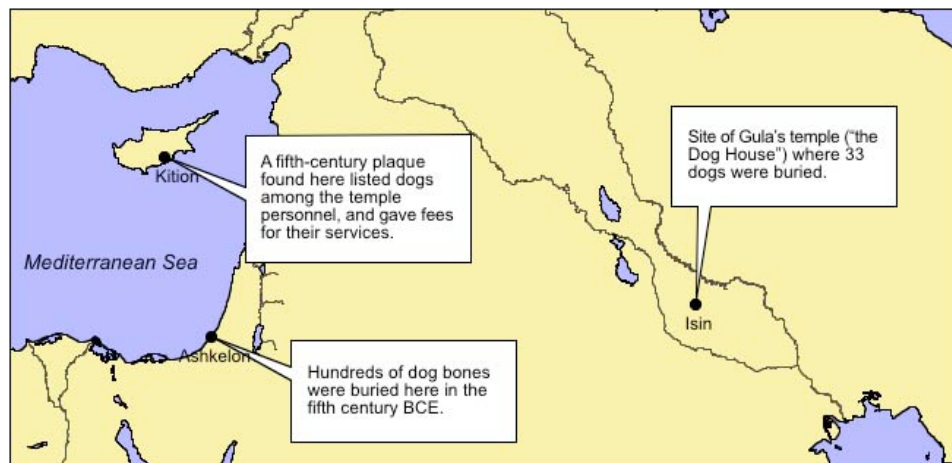
BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCES

Stager, Lawrence. "Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* (May/June 1991) 26–42. Stager's article lays out the real-life historical background for the fictional creature presented here.

WEB SOURCES

The Canaan Dog Club of America <http://cdca.org>
See especially the "Breed Info" and "History" pages. The modern descendants of the Ashkelon healing dog breed remain popular with dog enthusiasts.



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