

Incaendum Faeles Vulpes (Feral vulpine like creature)

Short description:

This rather rare creature can only be found on a few planets, it has rarely been studied or transported. The only place it is commonly found is on gorgon myriad IV, a rough and dangerous planet, it is pretty much a collection of deserts and savannahs. The creature manages to survive in an ecosystem of giants, leeching water from the large oasis's which are littered across the surface of the planet. The oasis's which are always in use by some of the monstrous creatures. These giants survive by eating the lush plants around the water, and others carnivorous creatures prey on the peaceful herbivores to savor their meat. Amongst these is a small fox like, or did it look more like a cat? It humbly walks in between these giants, approaching the water with confidence, and quick to leave after quenching its thirst. The native people of this planet fear it, and the giants let it rest, it is truly a remarkable sight.

Anatomy:

The body structure of the Icaendum Faeles Vulpes, or fennix as the natives like to call it, greatly resembles that of a fox, although the ears and the tail are of somewhat more feline origin. How it came to exist through evolution is still a mystery. Their most famous trait is being very warm, especially internally.

Their fur pattern is mostly dark red, or maroon brown in rare cases. Some areas like from the chin to the underbelly are yellow. A typically canine set of teeth, and paws that are a mix of both felines and canines alike. The yellow patches seem to glow (luminescent bacteria?) the glowing tip of their tail sticks out when active at night.

They are typically around the size of a desert fox, or fennecs as they are commonly named, but our spotter reported larger specimens that go up to the size of a common woodland fox.

Now for the most interesting part, for which me and my crew luckily had access to advanced equipment, which allowed us to thoroughly examine the specimens we caught without executing an autopsy. It seems that these creatures are filled with a series of peculiar bacteria, the fennix are regarded as plague carriers by the natives, and animals dare not touch one of them alive nor dead. These bacteria can be categorized in 3 major groups. The first extracts nutrients and minerals from plants and meat which the fennix were to consume. They get more and more active as the creature gets hungrier. They are rather harmless compared to the other groups. The second turns carbon and other flammable materials into some kind of gasoline, which the fennix stores in a sac in its body, usually compressed, allowing it to store more, which makes the creature heavier than expected. The gasoline can be easily turned into a flammable gas by the creature. The third works similarly to the second, this one producing some kind of flammable sludge which is littered with bacteria from the third group. This resource also gets compressed and stored, if kept long enough, the bacteria and the pressure of the sac refine it into some kind of dark lump, which doesn't catch fire as easily, and lasts quite long as a fuel source. This lump is often refined into some kind of gemstone, treated so it can't burn at all. They are found at random, a fennix will excrete this lump as it is no longer useful to it. In its throat the fennix has some kind of ignition organ, which releases some gas, heating it up until it catches fire. The fennix can ingest almost anything, excreting the few resources that it can't use, I dropped my diamond ring in the cage, and I never got it back.

Defense mechanisms:

The third group of bacteria does not limit its work range to the body of the fennix, it usually won't break down any matter without commands from its host, at least not efficiently, dieing out quickly without the high temperatures and nutrients of the internal of a fennix. But as soon as it gets in contact with matter which belongs to a living being, it will use the nutrients to keep itself going, especially thriving in warm blooded creatures. When an organism comes in contact with these micro organisms, they will experience deep agony as the bacteria turns its very being into the flammable sludge contained within the fennix. The sludge gets formed in some kind of abscesses, usually, but not limited to, the contaminated areas. Only a thin layer of decomposing skin keeps the sludge from flowing out of the skin. The immune system can stop the bacteria from claiming too much of an area, but giant blisters of half a meter have been documented on elephants in the wild. Typically they end up covering an area of 3-15 cm. Natural predators are aware of this, so they will not eat or hunt fennix to preserve their health. When untreated this "infernal plague" as we have come to call it, is very deadly. When popped, these blisters leave large painful wounds, as the bacteria digs deep into the flesh. If you happen to contract this disease, it is in your best interest to take antibiotics as soon as possible, and unfortunately, but necessary, one has to pop the blisters to shorten the lifetime of these colonies of bacteria, and to minimize the damage. Make sure to use protective hand gear whilst doing so. Wash out the wounds carefully thereafter. One night, my colleague and I have documented a brief but fierce fire in the distance, after enlarging the image we had taken with our camera, we could make out that it had been an elephant engulfed in flames, most likely because of the blisters from the infernal plague igniting. We did not find what had caused the necessary spark. Protective gear is highly advised, normal clothes will offer only minimal protection against the bacteria.

Just being a plague carrier is apparently not enough for this marvel of evolution. The fennix has the capability of shooting out some of the gasoline from its sac, igniting it in their throat, causing a fierce flame to leave their muzzle. They do this when threatened. They don't use this ability offensively, it is merely a means to scare of any creature that it considers a threat. They can sometimes be seen making small flames as a form of recreation, especially the puppies. It is a playful sight on a cold dark night.

The sludge which they produce can also be used as their most deadly attack. When pushed into a corner, or when breathing fire doesn't work after one or two attempts, the fennix will spit sludge at anything which dares to provoke it, machines and animals alike. They have the option to set the sludge aflame as well, but often choose not to. The sludge causes an acid like burn when it hits, infecting the target with the infernal plague of high degree. When set aflame the degree of burns is worse, but the rate of infection is very minor. It takes a while for the sludge to burn out, and the way it sticks to the skin when heated makes it very dangerous, causing massive burns to appear as it burns.

It is possible for fennix to run out of offensive fluids and sludge, but they can dish out quite a bit before that happens. A fennix is easily provoked, it is advised to approach them very carefully. Lastly, the fennix is small and agile, they can easily escape like a cat escapes the hands which want to pet them. To get trough the cold desert nights, the fennix will bury themselves under the sand, try not to step on one of these small but ferocious creatures.

Behaviour:

The fennix are no hunters, they might attempt to catch a mouse or a rat when they see one, but it is not part of their usual diet. Much like vultures, these vulpine creatures will consume corpses left by the large predators around them. One will never have to fear a fennix attacking them out of famine. Although they typically eat meat from corpses, they absolutely adore cuttlefish, and it is often used when trying to tame and domesticate one of these creatures. They can also consume fruit, or plant matter like grass. The latter (plant matter, not fruit) however can't satisfy the hunger of a fennix, it can merely serve as fuel for its abilities.

Fennix are very playful, they have a lot of energy and can be seen chasing each other in the desert heat. They are very cowardly, when domesticated, only the bravest fennix will stand their ground to protect their master or their property.

Taming a fennix takes patience, but they are generally easier to domesticate than wild horses. Treats like cuttlefish will quickly convince them of your goodwill, and they won't deny a comfy cushion to sleep on.

Fennix live in small groups. When it comes down to it, it is each for their own, they will only help another if it doesn't mean risking their own neck. Some of them dislike water, most of them however, love a refreshing bath, or a few cubes of ice to cool. Give them that special feeling of a hot coal taking an ice bath.

Their fire breathing ability is dangerous when kept as pet, it is advised to train them to release the urge to breathe fire in a safe environment, or to just deny them from using that ability at all. Some fennix have a rare genetic defect, which prevents them from storing any gasoline they produce, making for a perfect pet. They still produce sludge, the lumps are harmless and free of bacteria, and unless heavily ill, they won't spit out any dangerous sludge. When threatened fiercely they might still attempt to do use their sludge, be wary.

Upon death:

A last note on fennix, especially handy information for anyone who decides to keep them around long term. When a fennix takes its final breath, they start to swell up due to their bacteria behaving differently. They get confused after their host dies, especially as the body cools off. Most of them explode due to the pressure of gas building up inside of them, in rare cases a fierce and fiery explosion as the flammable substances within are ignited. When they explode they release a very deadly amount of sludge bacteria, beware of the infernal plague. It takes a month for the levels of bacteria to drop to safe levels for approach. In another rare case they merely shrink and shrivel after bloating, these cases are less infectious, just like when they explode into inferno, in which case most of the bacteria burn up with the body.