

Reproduction.

Every creature has to reproduce in some way, and unfortunately crew casualties cannot be avoided when working with wild animals...

The mating season of the fennix is one which some of the smaller creatures on Gorgon Myriad IV should be wary of. Fennix are divided in two genders, male and female. The majority of fennix are male, about 70% of a normal fennix population. During the mating season, fennix will go into some kind of heat, they will actively look for partners to mate with. The mating season lasts anywhere between a week and two weeks. Mating can happen outside of the mating season, as fennix are pretty much fertile during the whole year, but the conditions have to be optimal. Mating season typically starts in early spring, but in rare cases it also starts mid or late spring.

In their natural habitat that would mean that fennix from different but nearby areas visit others, these creatures avoid inbreeding for social reasons, which will be explained in a later issue, and it is the main reason for which different individuals migrate during this period, since siblings tend to stay in the same areas, and they have to find individuals who are not related. Fennix will start migrating one or two days before mating season, when the heat starts to appear. In captivity the fennix will still go in heat according to their biological clock, but it isn't a requirement to breed. All they need is another creature in this case.

Male fennix have reproductive organs similar to that of vulpines, the genitalia are pretty much identical. During mating, the male will penetrate the female fennix, the males insert a tiny foetus (often referred to as pups in this report) which already have some primitive senses, this event is accompanied by ejaculation. The foetus are capable of slight smell and taste, which will be explained further in the report. In the womb, they nest. In this case they will stay inactive until the female fertilizes these foetus.

Due to the space in their bodies reserved for flammable sludge and fuel, female fennix are incapable of carrying out the whole pregnancy. An average litter consists of 4-6 pups or kits, since not all pups or foetuses manage to nest. Pregnancy will last for about 20 days. Compared to other vulpine species, this is very small. In rare cases when only one or two pups manages to nest, pregnancy will last 55 days, and the pups will develop for the largest part inside of the mother.

In all other cases, the fennix will give birth after 20 days, these pups, who look more like some kind of enlarged maggots with limbs that have only begun to develop have only very primitive senses at that stage. The limbs look like stubs, the same can be said for the tail. Their eyes have not yet developed, ears are only starting to develop, the only senses they have is a sense of smell, and a weak sense of taste. At this stage they have further developed their little mouths, not quite the muzzle shape as it is supposed to be yet, but capable of chewing as their mouths are filled with frail temporary teeth.

Now there are two possible scenarios, you have the situation where the mother will look for carcass or a corpse to place the little pups in. Usually she bites off a chunk, placing them in the gap she has created in the corpse. The pups will feed of the corpse, and continue to develop inside, typically for 20 hours to a day or two in some cases. They develop very quickly. They find their way out of the corpse after this period, usually not the same way they had entered. These individuals are a lot smaller at first compared to the fennix who develop largely inside of the mother, and they

never end up as big after reaching adult proportions. The mother comes to pick the pups up shortly after, always staying next to the corpse during the period they develop, food being brought in by her mate.

There is always the risk of corpse eaters, or predators who can smell the fresh pups wanting to eat them, which is another reason why the mother sticks around. She will scare off any creatures with her flames, even calling out for her mate, or fellow fennix when she gets overwhelmed. You should be wary when you see a fennix next to a corpse, they are cowardly, but they will protect their young. Fennix do not have sufficient deadly bacteria in the early stages, and are thus edible to deadly predators.

The second scenario is quite different, and odd to say the least, it also the most common one. All females choose a mate, usually just one, and they mate multiple times during the mating season. When all females are occupied, this is quite common with the rather low amount of females. When a male can't find a fennix to mate with, it will look for another creature.

In this case the fennix will look for an orifice, quickly tying themselves to it during mating. A lot of creatures fear fennix, and will panic when attempted to be used for breeding, but some won't resist, either paralysed by fear from the flames which the fennix can produce, and some more intelligent creatures fear repercussions from the fennix if they resist. These last two cases are perfect for the male fennix to insert their pups into a suitable host. Fennix will not bother cold blooded creatures or particularly large creatures as they are difficult to mate with.

The pups will usually feed off nutrients once they reach the stomach. When given a host like this they tend to act as a parasite for around a week. The fennix who grow up like this are usually the starters of new variants, as they occasionally take over superior and compatible genes from their hosts. Although rarely, it isn't impossible to take over inferior genes either. They also adapt partial DNA string to a mucus covering their body in order to confuse the immune system of the host which allows them to not be seen as a threat to the host body. The pups are incapable of exiting the way they came, as they have no knowledge of the anatomy of their host, they usually use their teeth, painfully and forcefully creating their own exit. In a lot of cases this ends up killing the host.

When another creature hunts down and consumes the host, these pups often end up in the predator, especially if they haven't grown large yet. These predators are often impossible to mate with, this causes even more variety, there is evidence of a single giant fennix, which had come from one of the gargantuan predators on this planet.

These pups are already larger than their common counterparts when they leave their host, which has often carried them far away from their parents, so there is no one to care for them but themselves as they get born, which is the main reason for a longer developmental stage. The pups are capable of handling a lot of bacteria and acids as they grow up, the only reason they don't get developed in the stomach of another fennix is because of the bacteria would not be able to recognize them, and the pup would risk being digested by the strong stomach acids.

After some in depth observation of both normal and parasitic fennix pups, we have also discovered what causes the weird ratio between male and female fennix. Most of the fennix are born out of parasitic scenarios, 60%. In this situation the ratio is 25% female, 75% male, rounding up for a male percentage of 45%. The genetic code for

fennix goes as follows. Males have a genetic identifier of XX, the females have a genetic identifier of XY, with Y being the key identifier. as the young rudimentary pups gets inserted in their host, They will all have the 2 pairs of identifiers XX and XY this would normally result in half male and half female. However, when the genetic identifier Y of a female gets damaged, the X identifier will be chosen instead, resulting in a male being developed instead of a female. The environment for parasitic scenarios is volatile, genetic damage occurs frequently, and results in the X of the identifier being chosen more often than the Y identifier.

An example of damage.

XX XY => (Xm Xm) (Xf Yf) => (Xm Xf) (Xm Yf)

Depending on the state of the 3 X's 2 of the identifiers will be discarded.

XX or XY will remain, if the Y is damaged the X will be chosen, since the Y is the weakest of the identifiers, it is often damaged and will result in the XX being chosen.

Since it is still hard for the pups to survive they also have the ability to absorb cells from the host, and bind their identifiers with them which ends up in unique subspecies. Again this seems to be their evolutionary means of survival. The last 40% of pups gets born out of normal sexual intercourse between males and females, there is also some damage here, 15% are female and 25% are male. This all sums up for a ratio of 30% female and 70% male.

Male fennix produce sperm as well, allowing them to breed with similar vulpine, feline and canine species, which seem to be compatible. In this case hybrids will develop along the lines of the female species. On the other hand, Female fennix can also breed with similar species, but will birth an incomplete foetus, except for rare cases where the female is rather large, or when there is only a single pup or kitten. The space in the body of a fennix reserved for sludge and fuel in any fennix doesn't vary as much when the creature is smaller or bigger than average, thus particularly large females can have their womb expand enough for a full pregnancy.