

This guide will continue to be revised during the course of a campaign I am currently playing in.

A Guide to the Pathfinder RPG

Hunter

From the Advanced Class Guide

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This guide uses the Animal Archive, Advanced Class Guide, Advanced Player's Guide, Advanced Race Guide, Core Rule Book, Ultimate Combat, and Ultimate Magic.

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Color Code

Blue is one of the best choices or features.

Green is a good choice or feature, particularly in the right adventure or if your hunter is built to take advantage of it.

Orange is a choice or feature of mediocre or situational value. Its usefulness will depend on your GM's style or your current adventure.

Red is a bad choice or feature, or one that will seldom provide a meaningful benefit.

Basic Stuff

Hit Die: A d8 will generate an average number of hit points, and you will probably have only a modest Constitution score.

BAB: The 3/4 (or medium) BAB progression is the most common in the game, but your hunter will be capable in combat if you focus on your strengths. You have magic and an animal companion at your disposal, after all.

Saving Throws: With a good Fortitude and Reflex progression, this could only be better with a good Will instead of Reflex. Due to the hunter's focus on both combat and divine spellcasting, you might end up with bonuses from all three saving throw ability scores. Animal Focus can give you Evasion and bonuses to Constitution and Reflex. If these allow you to spend less treasure on ability score increasing magic items, you could spend more on saving throw boosting magic items and end up with a pretty solid set of saving throws.

Skills: 6 skill points per level is a healthy number but your Intelligence is not likely to increase that very much. Still, you have a decent class list that you can diversify with a trait or archetype. See the section on skills.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: You know how to use all martial weapon, light and medium armor, and even shields. You aren't proficient in heavy armor or tower shields, but don't consider that a disadvantage.

Hunter Class Features

Spells (1): With 6-level spell casting, you are a spontaneous caster whose spells per day is like that of a prepared caster. Unlike the two classes that the hunter is based on, you can not change your spells each day. You are stuck with the ones you choose as you gain levels, and they can not be used in great quantity. However, you are a rare spell caster that can choose from two different spell lists: the druid and the ranger. Both of the them have spells that do not appear on the more common wizard and cleric lists. You learn one or more new spell each time you gain a level, so take care in choosing them because you can change a choice only once every three levels.

In addition to your spells known that you get to choose, you add all of the *summon nature's ally* spells to your list in addition to those you have chosen. If your animal companion dies, the duration of your *summon nature's ally* spells increase from rounds to minutes. The one spellcasting restriction you face is that you cannot cast spells of an alignment opposed to your own. For example, if you are chaotically-aligned, then you won't be able to cast spells with the lawful descriptor.

Animal Companion (1): An animal companion is a mighty asset. It gives any character that has one a second set of actions to use. An animal companion is a feature of the druid and ranger, but it nearly defines the hunter. In addition to what all companions normally get, yours will also gain the benefit of your Animal Focus class feature, all of your teamwork feats, and eventually a few extra tricks. If your animal companion dies, your Animal Focus and *summon nature's ally* spells become more potent. See the section on building your animal companion.

Animal Focus (1): This feature allows you to gain an animal themed magical benefit for as long as the duration lasts or until you choose a new one. The best part of this feature is not in each specific benefit, but that the entire list is made available to you from the very beginning. Since there are no permanent choices, it is versatile. See the section on animal focuses.

Nature Training (1): This ability allows the hunter count as both a druid and ranger in order to qualify for feats, etc. There might have been plans to release material to make this feature worth something, but a search for character options that can take advantage of this yields disappointingly few results. For example, feats with a minimum druid level also require the Wild Shape class feature. Perhaps there will be more material released in the future.

Wild Empathy (1): This allows you to befriend animals. Maybe when there is a nature-oriented class with an emphasis on Charisma, or if there was an option to add a decent bonus to the check, this long neglected class feature will amount to something. For now it will be difficult to reliably get your check results high enough to pacify aggressive animals, and your party will end up using magic and weapons instead.

Precise Companion (2): You gain one of two feats for free., and each provides a nice benefit: either you can ignore a penalty to ranged attacks, or you and your companion's bonus to attack when flanking increases. It's a shame that these are the only two choices and that aside from teamwork feats the bonus combat feats start and end here, but being able to ignore the prerequisites is nice.

Track (2): This grants a bonus on Survival checks made to track creatures. It will be used most often in certain types of campaigns and at low level when you and your party have less magic to solve your problems with.

Hunter Tactics/Teamwork Feats (3): Teamwork feats are generally lackluster because you need one or more of your party members to choose them as well. They literally have no benefit when no one else has them. On top of that, so many of them are just poor choices. However, this is not a problem for you and your animal companion. You receive them as bonus feats and your companion gains all of the teamwork feats that you have. You can even switch around your newest teamwork feat to cater to a current situation or to test out a new one out.

Improved Empathic Link (4): This allows you to see through your companion's eyes. Some players will not risk sending an animal companion off on their own, but for those who are brave enough this feature can provide you a direct look at what lies ahead.

Woodland Stride (5): Some combat encounters becomes much more difficult when terrain limits the adventurers' mobility but not the monsters'. This allows you to ignore difficult terrain outdoors. Many adventures will take place in dungeons and urban areas and you might spend time flying about on your animal companion, so it is less helpful in those cases. Still, there will be plenty that take place in the wilderness. This feature's usefulness will depend on how much your GM likes to use difficult terrain.

Bonus Tricks (7): There number and variety of tricks available to animals has enjoyed a welcome increase over the years. However, since most animals can have a base of six tricks and animal companions eventually acquire an additional seven as the master gains levels, an extra three won't make much of a difference.

2nd Animal Focus (8): At the same level your bonuses from animal focus improve, you also gain the ability to use two at the same time. This is a significant increase in the potency of the class feature.

Swift Tracker (8): Hopefully by this level tracking won't be such an important part of your adventures that you'll be following creatures through the wilderness every other game session. The feature itself is not bad. It's just that if you gain a new class feature and never get to use it, it feels like a waste.

Raise Animal Companion (10): This feature allows you to bring your slain companion back to life, without being stuck with negative levels that require *restoration* spells to deal with. Your hunter receives only 1 negative level and it goes away by itself in 24 hours. A welcome boon if you are attached to your animal companion.

Speak With Master (11): If you use your companion as a scout, not only can you see through its eyes, but you can also give it special instructions beforehand and ask specific questions afterwards. If you are seeking insight into your companion's motivations or are just looking for a friend to share your thoughts with, remember that most animals have an Intelligence score of 2.

Greater Empathic Link (14): The range of your empathic link increases from 1 mile to 10. By this level though, you are probably not frequently relying on animals for gathering information if someone in your adventuring party has divination spells at their disposal. If not, perhaps your companion's scouting abilities will be enough.

One With The Wild (17): You can now influence animals that have a type similar to your companion's. This would be a more impressive sub-capstone ability if it gave you influence over all animals - not just those resembling your companion. This severely limits the number of animals it affects, and by 17th level you will have things worse than animals to worry about.

Master Hunter (20): The bit about tracking is in here just so the 2nd and 8th level tracking abilities reach some kind of conclusion. At 20th level, you might never track even a single creature. The nice part of this capstone is that you can choose a third animal focus that has an unlimited duration.

ANIMAL FOCUS

This wonderful class feature allows you to adopt animal-themed qualities that provide a bonus or benefit of some kind. At 1st level it can be used only once per day for one minute benefit, so you must choose wisely to make sure that it will count for something. As you gain levels you will be able to use animal focus during multiple encounters or to switch to a different focus during an encounter. It won't take many levels before you use this ability every time something happens in the game. The bonuses also increase as you advance in level. Your animal companion also gains the bonus from a focus, but unlike yours it has unlimited use and does not need to worry about duration. If your animal companion dies, you can use its focus on yourself in addition to the focus you normally get.

Bat: Darkvision is good for any character, but many have it already. At high levels, the short range Blindsense could save your life.

Bear: An increase to Constitution can help you live longer by increasing Fortitude saves, hit points, and stabilization checks, but could also end your life very quickly. When you end your focus or switch to different one, all of these extra hit points go away. At 8th level that means 16 hit points, and at 15th level that means 45. Use caution. The enhancement bonus gained by this animal focus duplicates the bonus granted by the spell *bull's strength* or of a belt of constitution, but does not stack with these or similar effects.

Bull: An increase to Strength can help any hunter, especially those using melee weapons. It improves melee attack and damage rolls, carrying capacity, combat maneuvers, checks to break things, damage with ranged weapons, under certain circumstances, and a couple of skills. The enhancement bonus gained by this animal focus duplicates the bonus granted by the spell *bull's strength* or of a belt of strength, but does not stack with these or similar effects.

Falcon: This bonus to Perception grants a significant boost to an important skill, particularly if you can anticipate when it is time to make an important check.

Frog: A bonus to jumping and swimming will help most often at low level when you and your party have less magic to solve problems with. What is disappointing about the bonus to jumping is that at 15th level the stag focus grants the same bonus and also increases your speed. This would be more impressive if it granted even a weak swim speed or if the jumping bonus scaled more quickly.

Monkey: A bonus to climbing will be used most often at low level when you and your party have less magic to solve your problems with. This would be more impressive if it granted even a weak climb speed.

Mouse: Even though Reflex is considered the least important saving throw, it is still great to have Evasion and be able to avoid damage entirely. The only tricky bit is knowing when you will need to make Reflex saves.

Owl: This bonus to Stealth grants a significant boost to an useful skill, particularly if you can anticipate when it is time to make important check.

Snake: This focus provides a meaningful boost to your attacks of opportunity, but you will not be able to use it often unless your character is built to generate such attacks. It is obviously a better choice if you are using a reach weapon. It also grants a bonus to AC against such attacks for when you need to provoke them.

Stag: This enhancement bonus to speed does very little at low levels but eventually becomes a significant increase.

Tiger: An increase to Dexterity will help any hunter, even those not using melee weapons. In addition to ranged attack bonus, it increases AC, initiative checks, Reflex saves, and several skills. The enhancement bonus gained by this animal focus duplicates the bonus granted by the spell *bull's strength* or of a belt of dexterity, but does not stack with these or similar effects.

Wolf: The scent ability can be useful at low levels when you need to track a creature, but you are unlikely to face invisible enemies. As you gain levels and the range increases, so does the likelihood that you will face invisible enemies.

If your hunter uses an archetype, it might replace some or all of the animals focuses he has available.

RACES

TRADITIONAL

Dwarf: +2 Con, +2 Wis, -2 Cha

A good spellcaster and very durable with great saving throws. The alternate favored class bonus increases your Wild Empathy check underground.

Elf: +2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Con

A good archer with extra skill points and a bonus to Perception. Elves get a bonus to overcome spell resistance, but these abilities go further with other classes more than they do the hunter. The alternate favored class bonus increases your critical confirmation rolls a weapon you choose. They also have some unique feats for archers.

Gnome: +2 Cha, +2 Con, -2 Str, small

They deal less damage, but can ride medium sized companions and have a variety of special abilities could appeal to some players. The alternate favored class bonus gives your animal companion Damage Reduction.

Half Elf: +2 to one ability of choice

They have a bonus to Perception and one other skill of choice. They make a fine choice if you plan to multiclass your hunter. The alternate favored class bonus increases your animal companion's speed.

Halfling: +2 Cha, +2 Dex, -2 Str, small

A good archer with good defenses, plus the bonus to saving throws and various skills are nice. They deal less damage, but can ride medium sized companions. The alternate favored class bonus increases your animal companion's saving throws.

Half Orc: +2 to one ability of choice

They have a bonus to Intimidate and gain Darkvision. However, relying on the Ferocity ability is a good way to end up dead. The alternate favored class bonus increases your animal companion's hit points.

Human: +2 to one ability of choice

They gain a free feat of their choice and one extra skill point per level. Humans can do well in any character class, particularly at low level when the extra stuff means more. The alternate favored class bonus increases your animal companion's skill points, which is unique.

OTHERS

Aasimar: +2 Cha, +2 Wis

They have Darkvision, a bonus to perception, and resistance to few energy types. They have good spellcasting ability, but have no features that directly help them with weapon combat.

Catfolk: +2 Dex, +2 Cha, -2 Wis

A good archer but not a great spellcaster. They have have an ability to roll twice on Reflex saves, move faster when using special movement actions, and bonuses to a few hunter skills.

Drow: +2 Cha, +2 Dex, -2 Con

A good archer, but not very durable. They have a wide variety of bonuses and features, and a seriously long ranged Darkvision.

Fetchling: +2 Cha, +2 Dex, -2 Wis

A good archer but not a great spellcaster. They have a few special abilities, a bonus to Stealth, and Darkvision.

Goblin: +4 Dex, -2 Cha, -2 Str, small

A great archer and with good defenses, plus they have Darkvision and fantastic bonuses to Ride and Stealth. They deal less damage, but can ride medium sized companions.

Hobgoblin: +2 Con, +2 Dex

An agile and durable hunter who can be capable in melee or ranged combat. They have Darkvision and a bonus to Stealth, but no other features.

Orc: +4 Str, -2 Cha, -2 Int, -2 Wis

A melee menace with large weapons, but the mental deficiency will hurt skill use and spellcasting. They have Darkvision and Ferocity, but relying on that is a good way to end up dead.

Oread: +2 Str, +2 Str, -2 Cha

A good melee warrior and spellcaster. They also have Darkvision and some acid resistance.

Ratfolk: +2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Str, small

A good archer and with good defense and extra skill points, plus they have Darkvision and a bonus to Perception. They gain a large bonus to Handle Animal checks if they should choose a dire rat companion. They deal less damage, but can ride medium sized companions.

Sylph: +2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Con

A good archer with extra skill points, but not very durable. They have some electricity resistance and can use the *feather fall* spell once per day.

Tengu: +2 Dex, +2 Wis, -2 Con

A good archer and spellcaster with a few skill bonuses, but not very durable. If you prefer melee weapons, they have a bite attack and proficiency in some exotic weapons.

Tiefling: +2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Cha

A good archer with extra skill points. They also have Darkvision, some skill bonuses, and are resistant to few energy types.

Undine: +2 Dex, +2 Wis, -2 Str

A good archer and spellcaster, but with slightly reduced damage output. They have Darkvision, a swim speed, and resistance to cold.

ABILITY SCORES

Strength (12-18)

Focusing on Strength and melee weapons is easier than other kinds of weapon combat. Your strength score affects the attack and damage rolls of melee weapons, carrying capacity, combat maneuvers, climbing, and swimming. Melee weapons do not use ammunition and can be wielded in two hands for better damage. They can be used to make attacks of opportunity but do not provoke them. Being good at melee combat requires fewer feats, so you have more freedom in choosing them. Even hunters who choose to focus on Dexterity should have a bit of Strength to increase damage rolls.

Dexterity (12-18)

Focusing on Dexterity and ranged weapons is generally harder than other forms of weapon combat but arguably has a better payoff. Dexterity affects the attack rolls of ranged weapons, many skills, reflex saves, AC, and initiative. Hunters with ranged weapons will end up making more attack rolls but being attacked less often. Ranged combat requires more feats to be good at, so it will take some time before you can diversify. A Dexterity-based hunter can also use melee weapons by using the Weapon Finesse feat. Damage output will suffer somewhat, but all other benefits remain. Even hunters who choose to focus on Strength should have a bit of Dexterity for its many befits.

Constitution (12-14)

This shouldn't be your highest or your lowest ability score, and if it is less than 10 you should think about another line of work. Constitution directly affects how durable you are by increasing hit points, Fortitude saves, and how much dying you can do before you are dead. The less you have, the closer to death you are.

Intelligence (8-12)

A hunter has a base of 6 skill points per level, but has no special abilities that rely on Intelligence. This means that you can afford to have either a slightly high or a slightly low Intelligence score depending on how important a variety of skills is to you.

Wisdom (13-16)

This is an important ability score because it affects your spellcasting, some important skills, and Will saves (which is your worst saving throw). Since you are not a fantastic spellcaster and will probably attack with weapons in combat more often than cast spells, there is some flexibility in how much Wisdom you need. You need enough Wisdom to eventually be able to cast 6th level spells, but since you will not be attacking with many spells you don't have to worry about DCs as much.

Charisma (8-12)

This is perhaps your least important ability score, because it does not affect on your offense, defense, spellcasting, or saving throws. A good Charisma will make you better at handling your animal companion, intimidating enemies, and using Wild Empathy but your experience with the hunter will not suffer much if you have a bad score.

TRAITS

Animalistic Affliction: Grants a bonus on Handle Animal and Wild Empathy checks.

Beast Bond / Born Rider: Grants a bonus on Handle Animal and Ride checks.

Feline Devotee: Grants a bonus on Wild Empathy checks with cats of all kind. Your animal companion also gains a bonus feat if it is a cat.

Horse Lord: Grants a bonus on Handle Animal and Ride checks with horses.

Mammoth Master: You gain a large bonus on Handle Animal checks involving mammoths, mastodons, woolly rhinoceroses, and other megafauna.

Reactionary: Grants a bonus on initiative checks.

Reckless: Grants a bonus on Acrobatics checks and makes it a class skill for you.

Wasp Whisperer: Grants a bonus on saving throws against poison and allows you to make Wild Empathy checks against vermin.

SKILLS

CLASS SKILLS

Climb: This skill will be used most often at low level when you and your party have less magic to solve problems with.

Craft: It would be nice if skills that you choose to flesh out your character's background were more useful, but they typically are not.

Handle Animal: This is actually a very useful skill when used as intended, which is to control your animal companion. The DC to make your companion perform a trick it knows is 10, and the DC for a trick it doesn't is 25, but a hunter gain a free +4 to the check due to the link it has with its animal companion. Despite all this, there is a distinct possibility that your GM will not require you to make these skill checks for one reason or another. Your companion will gain tricks for free as you advance in level, but you can also use this skill to change the tricks your animal knows during your free time. Increasing your companion's Intelligence to 3 does not negate the need for this skill.

Heal: This skill will be used most often at low levels when you and your party have less magic to solve problems with. However, if your animal companion is deemed a low priority on your party's magical healing, then you can use this skill to tend to its wounds.

Intimidate: This is your sole "social" skill unless you include Handle Animal or Wild Empathy, so it might be worth having. Your Charisma will probably be mediocre, but you can get bonuses from other sources.

Knowledge (dungeoneering): This skill is useful for identifying monsters, and occasionally when your adventures take you underground. Aberrations and oozes are some of the less common creature types, but they are types whose traits you will definitely want to be aware of.

Knowledge (geography): This skill can give you information about the physical layout of the world you are adventuring in among other things. It does not have any creature types associated with it. It's usefulness depends on your GM and the particular adventure.

Knowledge (nature): This skill is useful for identifying monsters, and acquiring information about things in the wilderness. Animals, fey, monstrous humanoids, plants, and vermin covers an awful lot of creature types.

Perception: We shouldn't have to say that this is the most useful skill in the game because it shouldn't have to be. However, it is the most frequently called for skill and it is used to find many important things, such as treasure, plot-relevant items, hazards, and ambush-oriented monsters.

Profession: It would be nice if skills that you choose to flesh out your character's background were more useful, but they typically are not.

Ride: You may or may not end up riding your animal companion, but you won't need many level until most of the DCs are easy to beat. In time, your GM may not require you to make such skill checks. You will need a better bonus to this skill if you are using the Mounted Combat feat.

Spellcraft: You can get away with not investing in this skill, especially if your party has other spellcasters. However, that does mean it isn't useful for identifying spells, magical effect, and magic items.

Stealth: There will be occasions where this skill will fail to live up to its potential due to the particulars of how it works, but it is still an iconic skill for a hunter and one of the few means to vanish from sight.

Survival: This skill will be used most often at low level when you and your party have less magic to solve problems with.

Swim: This skill will be used most often at low level when you and your party have less magic to solve problems with.

NON-CLASS SKILLS

Acrobatics: This isn't on your list of class skills, but it would fit in nicely. The ability to jump will become less important if you gain the service of a flying animal companion or with the right magic item, but tumbling will remain useful if you are good at it.

Disable Device: This isn't on your list of class skills, but it could fit in nicely if you end up as your party's trap finder, locksmith, or saboteur.

Escape Artist: No one wants to be grappled by an enemy, particularly an archer. If you are Dexterity-based, then you will need the Agile Maneuvers and Defensive Combat Training feats to be good at escaping. Alternately, you can invest in this skill.

Other Charisma- and Intelligence-based skills: Flavor your hunter the way that makes you happy, but it is almost guaranteed that someone else in the party will do a better job at using these skills.

GENERAL FEATS

Acrobatics/Alertness/Athletics/Deft Hands/Self-Sufficient/Stealthy: These feats all grant a bonus to either hunter class skills or skill that cater to a hunter's ability scores. There are probably better ways to spend your feats, but at least you will be able to go from being good at something into being great at it. How useful this is depends on your GM and the campaign.

Agile Maneuvers: Normally your combat maneuver bonus is determined using your Strength. This feat allows you to use your Dexterity instead. Since you have a 3/4 BAB and do not have bonus feats, it will be a challenge for you to do well with combat maneuvers.

Augmented Summoning: This feat increases the Strength and Constitution of your summoned creatures. Not all hunters will make use of such creatures often, but it certainly makes them better in a fight. The Spell Focus prerequisite makes this one a little more difficult to get.

Blind Fighting: This feat makes you less vulnerable when you are blinded, and when fighting invisible enemies or in areas of poor visibility. When you are forced to roll percentile dice for a miss chance, you get to re-roll if you miss. This is a great feat but not a requirement, and definitely not a requirement at low level. There are higher level versions of this feat that can eliminate miss chances altogether. This overlaps somewhat with the benefits of the Improved Precise Shot feat.

Boon Companions: When a hunter multiclassed into a class that doesn't have the animal companion feature, his effective druid level becomes lower than his character level. The result of this is a less powerful animal companion. This feat allows up to 4 of your other class levels to count as druid/hunter levels for the purpose of calculating your animal companion's abilities.

Combat Casting: This feat grants a bonus to casting spells defensively. When a spellcaster fails such a check, the spell is lost. A complete waste of a spell. This bonus is a great benefit, but a hunter will not get to take advantage of it nearly as often as a primary spellcaster. This is because he is better off casting most of his spells outside of combat, and focusing on weapon attack during combat. It is difficult but not impossible for a hunter to increase his focus on spellcasting, and if you manage that then you will want this feat.

Deceitful/Magical Aptitude/Persuasive: These feats grant bonus to skill that the hunter will probably not be very good at. There are probably better ways to spend your feats, but you can go from a mediocre talent in something to something almost passable. It is probable that someone else in your party can use the skill better with skill points alone, and that you can use the feat to become better at something you can actually be good at.

Defensive Combat Training: Since you have a 3/4 BAB, your CMD will always be slightly behind enemies with a full BAB. This feat allows you to use your character level

in place of your BAB to determine your combat maneuver defense.

Dodge: This grants a small bonus to your AC and CMD.

Eagle Eyes: A seldom used rule that Perception checks suffer a -1 penalty per 10 feet away the target is. If your GM happens to include this, this feat allows you to ignore the penalties to the first 50 feet.

Evolved Companion: This feat grants your companion one of the benefits that is normally only available to a summoner's eidolon.

Fast Empathy: Wild Empathy normally requires one minute to use, but this feat changes it to one standard action. Wild Empathy is a difficult class feature to use, due to its reliance on Charisma and how difficult it is to get any miscellaneous bonuses to it, but this could actually make it usable before an animal attacks.

Great Fortitude: This feat grants a bonus on all Fortitude saves. As your hunter advances in level, Fortitude and Will becomes more important than Reflex, because Reflex save attacks deal damage, whereas Will saves affect your ability to act and Fort saves can kill you or at least drag you nearer to it. A bonus to this save can save your life, if you have the feat to spare.

Hammer the Gap: This feat increases your damage with each successful hit during a full attack. The hunter does not gain as many attacks from his BAB as other classes, but with the Rapid Shot and Manyshot feat a ranged hunter can rack up some extra damage.

Improved Critical: This feat doubles the critical threat range of one kind of weapon. This is a huge deal of course, but you should consider a couple of things. Many hunters will use a bow, and since the bow has a small critical range this feat will not go as far as a weapon with a larger crit range like the greatsword or rapier. Some GMs make it easy for a player to get specific magic weapons, while others prefer to hand out various magic weapons. Just because you have favor a specific weapon when you get this feat, it doesn't guarantee the next magical weapon you get will be the same kind. Know your GM's preference before choosing this feat.

Improved Initiative: This feat grants a bonus on initiative checks. It is a safe assumption that you want to act before your enemies, although due to the unpredictable nature of conflict, encounter variations, and GM style going first can occasionally not matter much. The option to go first in these cases is still better than not.

Improved Unarmed Strike: This feat makes your punches and kicks a little more deadly. It isn't likely to play into any special build with a hunter, but if you use a ranged weapon you won't normally be able to provide a flank to anyone. There are a few ways around this (such as armor spikes, natural weapons, switching weapons, and certain

other feats), but this is a simple way to provide a flank while wielding your ranged weapon. It is also the prerequisite for some more interesting feats.

Iron Will: This feat grants a bonus on all Will saving throws. By the time your hunter reaches mid level, his Will save falls behind his Fortitude and Reflex saves, and Will saves are becoming more important at those same levels.

Lightning Reflexes: This feat grants a bonus on all Reflex saving throws. There is a good chance that Reflex will be your best saving throw throughout your career, and since Reflex saves gradually become less important than Fortitude and Will as you advance in levels you should probably invest in those instead. However, the mouse animal focus will allow you to capitalize on a high reflex save.

Mounted Combat: If you intend on riding your companion into battle, then picking up this feat is the least you should do for it. You don't actually need the feat to fight mounted, but it will give you the opportunity to turn one successfully attack against your mount into a miss each round. This feat is also the prerequisite for all other mounted combat feats, but you may not have many extra feats to spare on these.

Mobility: This feat grants you a bonus to your AC when your movement provokes attacks of opportunity. It's not a very exciting bonus, but it is the prerequisite for some other feats.

Quick Draw: This feat makes it easy to draw weapons during your turn. This can be helpful if you need to switch between ranged and melee, or if you use thrown weapons.

Toughness: This feat grants an extra hit point per level you have, and everyone can benefit from more hit points. This isn't as exciting as some other feats, so it's up to you as to when they become a priority.

Trick Riding: This is an improvement on the Mounted Combat feat, and gives you the opportunity to turn a second successfully attack against your mount into a miss each round.

Vermin Heart: This feat lets you affect vermin with your spells and Wild Empathy class feature as though they were animals. The benefit of this will be most evident against vermin swarms, which are immune to single target attacks. If your GM is game for it, you might be able to talk a swarm into not attacking you or casting *charm animal* on it. Some GMs will just attack you if you try talking.

MELEE FEATS

Cleave: This feat allows you to make two melee attacks against adjacent enemies, but causes you to suffer a small penalty to your AC. This is one of the way ways for you to move and make more than one attack.

Combat Reflexes: This feat allows you to make more than one attack of opportunity per round. This one is a must if you use a melee reach weapon.

Lunge:

Improved Two-Weapon Fighting: This feat allows you to make attacks with weapons in both hand, while suffered only a small penalty to attack rolls. Following the road of this combat style requires many feats, a balance of Strength and Dexterity, spending twice as much money on magic weapons, and a reliable source of damage bonuses. It can be done, but it is difficult for a hunter.

Power Attack: This feat allows you to accept an attack roll penalty in order to gain a bonus to the damage roll. There is an argument that that this can lead to dealing less damage in the long run, but higher individual damage rolls are pretty exciting and you have options to offset the penalty. It is also the prerequisite for a bunch of feats.

Pushing Assault: This feat allows you to give up your bonus damage from Power Attack in order to push your enemy into a different square, but without a combat maneuver check. Normally you will want enemies to be next to you, but this could be a tactical advantage in certain situations.

Spring Attack: This feat allows you to move up to an enemy, make an attack, and then move away again. You should normally avoid this because making a full attack is usually a better option, but this can work out well if you have a strong single attack or have a reach weapon and want your enemy to approach you.

Stand Still: When an enemy's movement provokes an attack of opportunity from you, this feat causes it to stop moving. If you are using a reach weapon, this can prevent it from getting close enough to attack you.

Step Up: When an enemy moves 5 feet away from you, this feat allows you to follow it 5 ft. Normally, this is something an enemy archer or spellcaster would do to attack without provoking attacks of opportunity, then you step close to them and deny that luxury. However, some GMs will stop using this technique once you have this feat.

Weapon Finesse: This feat allows you to use your Dexterity for melee attack rolls instead of Strength, so it is a must for Dexterity-based melee hunters and ranged hunters who want to improve their melee attacks.

RANGED FEATS

The ranged attack feat tree doesn't have many branches on it, especially early on. Most archers begin their career with the same four or so feats.

Clustered Shots: When you make a full attack, this feat lets you add up the damage from all of the hits and only apply the enemy's damage resistance once. At high level, many enemies will have DR and this feat will keep your damage output high. Remember: an archer deals less damage per attack than a warrior with a big sword but makes many more attacks per round, and DR has a greater affect on lower damage rolls.

Deadly Aim: This feat allows you to accept an attack roll penalty in order to gain a bonus to the damage roll. There is some convincing math illustrating that that this can lead to dealing less damage in the long run, but higher individual damage rolls are pretty exciting and you have options to offset the penalty.

Elven Accuracy: This elf-only feat allows you to re-roll your miss chance when concealment causes your attack to miss.

Far Shot: This increases the range increment of your weapons, which will lead to fewer attack roll penalties. However, if you are using a bow then your range increment is already pretty big.

Impact Critical Shot: This feat allows you to bull rush an enemy when you score a critical hit against it. This isn't likely to turn the tide of the battle, but it's a fun ability.

Manyshot: As the follow-up to Rapid Shot, this feat allows your first attack to fire two arrows at once, with no attack penalty. At a certain point, an archer starts using a ridiculous number of arrows.

Mounted Combat: Thanks to your animal companion, there is a change you will be riding and shooting at the same time. This feat lessens the penalties for doing so. Generally, you will know if you need this feat or not. Many archers will prefer to let their companion do the melee fighting while they stay away from it.

Parting Shot: The "Parthian shot" was an actual military tactic used by mounted archers who fired arrows as their horses galloped away from the enemy. This feat doesn't require a mount of any kind, but once per combat it allows you to make a single ranged attack when you use the withdraw action. A cool ability, but five feats is a steep cost for firing one arrow during a tactical withdrawal.

Pinpointing Targeting: As a standard action, you can make what is essentially a ranged touch attack. Sure, you're giving up the 6 or more attacks you would normally make on your turn, but this is for enemies that are seriously hard to hit. With a +16 BAB prerequisite, a hunter will never qualify for this feat unless he multiclassed into a full-BAB class.

Point Blank Master: This feat allows you to use a single ranged weapon of your choice without provoking attacks of opportunity when you use it, but you must have the Weapon Specialization feat for the weapon and the only way to get this ability is by multiclassing.

Point Blank Shot: Grants a +1 to ranged attack and damage rolls within 30 feet. You will be able to use this frequently, and it is the prerequisite for every other ranged combat feat out there.

Precise Shot: This feat negates a huge attack penalty that you normally suffer for shooting enemies who are fighting your companion and other allies. Happily, you can gain this one for free at 2nd level. This feat is a prerequisite for many others.

Precise Shot, Improved: This lets you ignore the attack penalty or miss change from partial cover or concealment. Your attacks still suffer normally from total cover or concealment.

Rapid Shot: This feat allows you to make one additional ranged attack when you use the Full-Attack action, but you suffer a -2 penalty on all of the attack rolls. Your attacks will miss a little more frequently and you'll soon start blowing through your ammunition, but archers get to make full attacks more often than melee warriors and you can cast *abundant ammunition* to counteract the supply issues. This feat is a prerequisite for many others.

Snap Shot: The ability to make attacks of opportunity against adjacent enemies with your favorite ranged weapon is pretty amazing, but you need to know your GM's play style. Some give up more attacks of opportunity, some less, some none at all if they can help it. The "improved" version of this feat increases the range from 5 feet to 10.

Shot on the Run: This feat essentially allows you to make a single ranged attack in the middle of your movement. This could be helpful when you want to make an attack and then get back to your hiding place, but you have better ways to use a full-round action and the prerequisites include two feats that are better suited for melee characters.

Sling Flail: If you use a sling, this feat allows you to make melee attacks with it. Even if you don't make melee attacks, in a pinch this will allow you to provide a flank to your allies.

Stabbing Shot: This elf-only feat allows you to make a melee attack with an arrow that pushes your enemy away from you, and then make the rest of your attacks without provoking attacks of opportunity. Normally an archer would use the 5-Ft Step action to accomplish this, but sometimes that isn't an option.

TEAMWORK FEATS

These are a typically poor choices because characters get only a limited number of feats and there is no payoff unless your allies choose the same feats. A hunter doesn't have that problem. Not only does he get them for free as he advances in level, but he can easily swap one out for a different feat when a situation calls for it and his animal companion gains the same ones he does. This versatility turns mediocre feats into good ones. Most teamwork feats require you and your companion to be positioned in a particular way

FLANKING

Outflank: This feat increases your flanking bonus from +2 to +4, which is something you should be able to take advantage of pretty often.

Pack Attack: Allows you to move 5 feet as an immediate action when you make an attack. Use this to move into a flanking position.

Pack Flanking: The Combat Expertise prerequisite makes this one difficult to qualify for, but it allows you and your companion to flank any enemy you are both adjacent to it - even when you are not on opposite sides of it.

Precise Strike: This grants an additional 1d6 damage to enemies you flank.

RANGED ATTACKS

Coordinated Shot: Grants a bonus to ranged attack rolls against the enemy that your companion is fighting. You should be able to take advantage of this one often.

Enfilading Fire: This works similarly to Coordinated Shot, except that the bonus is slightly better and it has more prerequisites. The bonuses from the two feats stack.

Target of Opportunity: This allows you to make a ranged attack against an enemy that your companion has hit with a ranged attack. Unfortunately, animals don't make ranged attacks (except for the camel and giant slug).

OTHER

Coordinated Maneuvers: As a 3/4 BAB class, you won't excel at combat maneuvers. But in a pinch, this feat will grant you a +2 to the check.

Duck and Cover: Allows you to use your companion's Reflex save die roll instead of your own. This one will be harder to use because you can't always anticipate when you will need it, but using your companion's roll could keep you out of trouble if you are willing to end up prone.

Escape Route: This feat allows you to move around allies without provoking attacks of opportunity. Encourage your allies to get this feat.

Intercept Charge: Allows you or your companion to become the target of an enemy's charge attack by moving into the path of the charge as an immediate action. This one is also difficult to anticipate, but it can allow one of you to protect the other from being hurt.

Lookout: Allows the two of you to act in a surprise round even if one of you fails to notice the surprise.

Paired Opportunist: This feat grant you a +4 bonus on attacks of opportunity, and allows your companion to make an attack of opportunity when you do. You'll want to be using a reach weapon to take advantage of this one.

Seize the Moment: The prerequisites will make this impossible to qualify for until higher level, but it will allow you or your companion to make an attack of opportunity against any enemy that the other has scored a critical hit against. Since your companion is unlikely to have an expanded critical range, it will mostly be your companion making these free attacks.

Shielded Caster: Grants a bonus to your concentration checks when you cast spells defensively. However, the Combat Casting feat is an easier option, and you will probably not be casting as many spells during a fight as other spellcasters.

Improved Spell Sharing: This feat allows you to split a spell's duration between you and your companion. Once you start getting spell durations that far outlast their use, you will be able to use it fairly often and essentially gain two castings of the spell for one.

Stealth Synergy: One of the problems with the Stealth skill is that it only takes one clumsy party member to botch the entire effort. This feat takes away that risk allowing everyone involved to use the group's highest die roll as their own.

Swap Places: This allows you and your companion to switch positions as an immediate action, which can be good when one of you is hurt and needs to get away from an enemy or when one needs to the other's position to make an attack. There are many tactical possibilities. The "improved" version of this feat allows you to use it when you the two of you are different sizes.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

The list of animal companions available in Pathfinder has become very long and will likely continue to grow. Before you make your final choice, check with your GM to see if any are prohibited. Some could take issue with your tyrannosaurus rex joining you on your journey to frozen mountain peaks, or your crocodile taking part as you negotiate political intrigue and deal with haughty nobles. You are allowed to replace your animal companion if you wish and so are not stuck with just one animal companion for your entire career, but you and your group may become attached to a particular animal ally and find it difficult to cast aside. Consider multiple options - both their strengths and liabilities.

ROLE: Think about what you want your animal companion's role to be in the group. In broad categories it could act as your personal bodyguard, fight at the front lines of combat, serve as your faithful mount, or scout ahead for danger. Many companions can fill more than one of these roles. Its ability scores, size, speed, skills, feats, and your choices will determine how successful it is.

FEATURES: As you gain levels and new abilities, so will your animal companion. These include Link, Share Spells, Evasion, bonus tricks, the Multiattack feat, and a bonus on saving throws against enchantments. It also also receive increases to its Dexterity, Strength, and natural armor bonus. Just like any character, it also receives a feat it reaches an odd-numbered hit die.

ADVANCING: Most animal companions begin at small or medium size, but a few begin large. At 4th or 7th level, most of the small and medium companions increase in size and gain bonuses to Strength and Constitution. If you do not care for these typical benefits, you are allowed to forego the typical advancement to give it a bonus to Dexterity and Constitution instead. Just like any character, it also receives a feat it reaches an odd-numbered hit die. For every four hit dice your companion has, you can add one ability score point to an ability score of your choice. The logical place to assign these increases is to the physical ability scores, but raising its Intelligence to 3 will allow it to choose any feat or skill. Its Strength and Dexterity will automatically improve over time, but remember to add one point to Constitution if it begins at an odd number.

MAGIC ITEMS: Depending on your adventuring party's relationship with you and your animal companion it could have a share in the party's resources or its needs could fall to you alone. A serpent is capable of wearing very few magic items, but an ape can wear as many as your hunter. These can help to mitigate a companion's weaknesses, but you will end up with fewer magic items than your allies if you have to share. You do not have the variety and numbers of spells that other spell casters have, so you might end up treating your companion's wounds yourself or leaving it in safety so its wounds can heal naturally.

VERMIN: These creatures tend to have some nice abilities, but they also have no Intelligence score. Being mindless, they are immune to mind-affecting effects and are completely ineligible for skill points and feats. Its skill bonuses will be based solely off of its ability score modifiers and it cannot gain the benefit of feats. Normally, vermin cannot learn any tricks, but a companion vermin can learn the tricks that all companions gain as the hunter advances in level. However, when you have the opportunity to increase an ability score you can choose to raise its Intelligence from — to 1. When you do so, it ceases to be mindless and can use skills, feats, and tricks normally.

DEAD COMPANIONS: It's possible that you look upon animal companions as an expendable resource, but remember that acquiring a new one takes time and your GM might restrict your choices based on the environment you are currently in. If you decide to move on without your animal companion, there are a couple of benefits you can take advantage of. Note that these two benefits are gained if your animal companion is dead, but the rules say nothing about what happens if you dismiss your companion, so talk to your GM. The first is that you gain its Animal Focus. In addition to your own limited duration focus you gain another with an unlimited duration. The second is that when you cast a *summon nature's ally* spell, the duration is in minutes instead of rounds. Depending on how you build your character, these could be used to great advantage.

What follows is an incomplete list of the available animal companions. Many of those not shown are just poor choices. The less powerful companions that are presented generally have some special features that might appeal to certain hunters.

Land Animals

These animals should be readily available in most game settings or when the GM wants to avoid more "exotic" companions. They are appropriate for most adventures.

- **Ape:** Begins with three attacks and a climb speed, but poor defenses. At 4th level, it becomes large.
- **Arsinoitherium:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companion. At 7th level, it becomes large, gains a trample attack, and its gore attack deals additional damage on a charge.
- **Baluchitherium:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companion with a good speed. At 7th level, it becomes large and gains a trample attack.
- **Bear:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companion with a good speed, but is of small size. At 4th level, it becomes medium and gains a trample attack.
- **Cat, Big:** Begins with good speed, three attacks, and the ability to make two additional attacks while grappling an enemy. At 7th level it becomes large and gains the grab and pounce abilities, allowing it to deal greater damage and lock down an enemy.
- **Cat, Small:** Begins with high speed, three attacks, and a superb Dexterity, but is of small size. At 4th level it becomes medium and gains the ability to move 10 times its speed on a charge.
- **Elephant:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companions with good speed and two attacks. At 7th level, it becomes large and gains a trample attack.
- **Gecko:** A small sized companion with the unique ability to travel on any surface as though under the effect of the *spider climb* spell. At 4th level it becomes medium and gains an increase to its speed.
- **Megaloceros:** A well-rounded companion with a good speed. At 7th level it becomes large, gains two secondary natural attacks, and its gore attack deals additional damage on a charge.
- **Rhinoceros:** Begins with good speed and good ability scores. At 7th level, it becomes large and its gore attack deals additional damage on a charge.
- **Giant Scorpion:** This vermin begins with good speed, three attacks, grab, a weak poison, darkvision, tremorsense, and a huge bonus to resist trip attacks. It has mediocre ability scores, but that's quite a starting package. At 7th level it becomes large and the range of its tremorsense increases.
- **Snake, Constrictor:** A slow moving companion with good ability scores and the grab ability that has both a climb speed and a swim speed. At 4th level it becomes large and can constrict enemies that it is grappling.
- **Weasel, Giant:** A small sized animal companion with a slow climb speed and a high Dexterity. It has the grab ability and deals Constitution damage to enemies it grapples. At 4th level it becomes medium.
- **Wolf:** A well-rounded animal companion with a high base speed, scent, and the ability to trip enemies it deals damage to. This is probably the most iconic of all animal companions, and is the kind most commonly depicted in artwork. At 7th level it becomes large.

Domesticated Animals

Domesticated animals shouldn't be a strange sight in urban settings according to the hunter's "urban hunter" archetype, although which animals are "normal" could vary between cultures. In some situations, a companion that does not draw attention the way a "wild" animal would is an asset.

- **Bird:** A small companion with a superb fly speed and three attacks. It isn't a very sturdy combatant, but its maneuverability makes it easier to provide a flank.
- **Badger:** A small sized companion with a climb speed and three weak attacks. What makes this companion special is that it has a burrow speed and can rage like a barbarian. At 4th level it becomes medium.
- **Camel:** Begins large sized with high speed, good ability scores, and a spit attack that sickens enemies. At 4th level, it gains a small boost to its ability scores.
- **Dog:** A small well-rounded animal companion with a good base speed. The wolf is a stronger choice overall, but the dog is one size category smaller and has a better Dexterity. Unlike other animal companions, the dog can be considered a household pet in human cultures. At 4th level it becomes medium.
- **Horse:** Begins large sized with high speed, well-rounded ability scores, and three attacks. At 4th level, its hoof attacks change to primary natural attacks.
- **Pony:** A medium size equivalent of the horse. It is inferior to the horse in all ways (ability scores, speed, attacks, armor class) but it is an appropriately sized mount for a small character.
- **Ram:** A small companion with a good speed and Dexterity, but little offensive ability. However, at 4th level it becomes medium, deals additional damage on a charge, and gains Improved Bull Rush as a bonus feat.
- **Rat, Dire:** A small sized animal companion with both a climb speed and a swim speed. At 4th level, its bite spreads a disease that inflicts Dexterity and Constitution damage.

Flying Animals

Animal companions that fly are generally less sturdy than their grounded counterparts. This makes them less effective as combatants and a bit of a liability, but flight is a big boon for hunters. It can keep the hunter out of reach from grounded enemies, lets a melee hunter reach flying enemies, and allows certain obstacles to be overcome.

- **Bat, Dire:** This companion begins with a good flying speed. It has a good Dexterity and Blindsight, but will not be very durable or effective in combat. At 7th level it becomes large.
- **Mantis, Giant:** This vermin has a climb speed and a good flying speed. It has two attacks, darkvision, the grab ability, and a large bonus to trip attacks. at 7th level, it becomes large, gains a secondary attacks against grappled enemies, and can make a full-attack during surprise rounds.
- **Roc:** Begins with a superb flying speed and three attacks. It has a high AC but not many hit points. At 7th level it becomes large.
- **Vulture, Giant:** A well-rounded animal companion with a good fly speed. At 7th level it becomes large.
- **Wasp, Giant:** This vermin has a high fly speed, darkvision, a weak poison, and a big bonus to resist trip attacks. However, its ability scores are mediocre and is not very sturdy. At 7th level, it becomes large.

Aquatic Animals

Aquatic companions are not appropriate for most adventures, but for others are an obvious choice. Some possess an Intelligence score of 1, which limits the number of tricks they can learn and makes expanding their feat selection a difficult possibility.

- **Crocodile:** This small sized companion is amphibious with a slow land speed, but has good ability scores. At 4th level, it becomes medium, gains a special tail attack, and can briefly increase its land speed. It also gains a special attack against grappled enemies that knocks them prone.
- **Moray Eel, Giant:** A well-rounded companion with a good AC and the grab ability. At 7th level it becomes large. It can gnaw on grappled enemies, allowing it to deal automatic damage and use a secondary attack
- **Orca:** Begins with a superb swim speed. It has a high Dexterity but otherwise mediocre ability scores and is not very durable. At 7th level it becomes large and gains long range blindsight.
- **Seahorse:** Surprisingly begins at large size with well-rounded ability scores, except for Intelligence. It is durable in combat, but has little offensive ability. At 4th level it gains a small boost to its ability scores and an ability to anchor itself to solid objects.
- **Snapping Turtle:** Begins with a slow swim speed, the scent ability, a superb AC, and mediocre ability scores. At 7th level it becomes large and gains the grab ability.
- **Shark:** A small sized companion with a good swim speed, the scent ability, and well rounded ability scores except for Intelligence. It is durable in combat, but short on offense. At 4th level it becomes medium and gains blindsight.

Dinosaurs

These animal companions have their own section because your GM might not allow them in the campaign setting. In general, dinosaurs are slightly more powerful than other animals. This is not true for flying dinosaurs, which are quite frail.

- **Allosaurus:** A strong choice due to speed and three attacks. At 7th level it becomes large and gains the grab and pounce abilities, allowing it to deal damage and lock down an enemy.
- **Ankylosaurus:** Has a superb starting AC but fewer hit points, so increase Constitution if you can. At 7th level, it becomes large and its tail attack stuns those it strikes. Its damage output will never be high, but it becomes a tank and something of a battlefield controller.
- **Brachiosaurus:** Begins as a modest companion, but at 7th level it becomes large and can trample enemies. If your GM rules that it functions like the Bestiary version, it should gain reach.
- **Deinonychus:** Begins as small size, but has high speed, lots of hit points, and three attacks. At 7th level, it becomes medium, gains pounce and has five primary natural attacks. It has reached its lethal potential.
- **Diplodocus:** Begins similar to the brachiosaurus, but at 7th level it gains a tail lash that allows it to attack two enemies at once. The colossal version in the Bestiary has a 60 ft reach, so talk to your GM about your companion's reach.
- **Pachycephalosaurus:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companion, and at 7th level it becomes large and gains a special charge attack that initiates a bull rush, and staggers the enemy on a critical hit. The entry lists a set DC, but it should scale with level.
- **Spinosaurus:** Begins with good ability scores, three attacks, and a swim speed. At 7th level, it becomes large.
- **Stegosaurus:** Begins with a superb AC and a tail attack that would be great if it had a matching Strength score. At 7th level, it becomes large and its tail attacks initiates a trip combat maneuver.
- **Triceratops:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companion, but not an impressive one. At 7th level, it becomes large and its gore attack deals additional damage on a charge.
- **Tyrannosaurus:** Begins as a well-rounded animal companion. At 7th level it becomes large and its bite attack deals twice its Strength bonus instead of 1-1/2.

ANIMAL COMPANION FEATS

Your animal companion will gain a total of 8 feats if you manage to make it to a high enough level. It hasn't a very large list of feats to choose from, so it's an important choice when it comes up. If you manage to raise its intelligence to 3 or higher, it will be able to gain any feat it qualifies for. Your animal companion gains all of your teamwork feats even if it doesn't qualify for them. Also, when choosing its first feat, it must be one that does not have a BAB requirement.

Acrobatic, Athletic, Skill Focus, and Stealthy: These feats increase your companion's skill bonuses. You could use this to compensate for the pathetic number of skill points it has, but you can only shine that penny so much. There are better options.

Agile Maneuvers: If you make it to 20th level, your companion will still only have a BAB slightly higher than a wizard due to the reduced progression of its 3/4 BAB. This means that its combat maneuver bonus will never be outstanding. However, some companions have a racial bonus to a specific maneuver and if it has a good Dexterity and poor Strength, you will want to grab this feat.

Armor Proficiency (light, medium, and heavy): At the cost of one feat, light armor is a great way to improve your companion's defenses. It stacks with an animal's natural armor bonus and will not decrease its speed. Medium armor allows for better armor, but the animal will move slower unless the armor is made from mithril. Heavy armor provided only a small increase in protection over medium, and you are guaranteed a speed decrease.

Blind-Fight: Some animals have the scent ability, which will help it to fight the invisible enemies that will become more frequent at higher level. Animals don't have many tricks in its bag outside of fighting, so will want to get this feat at some point so it is not left helpless.

Combat Reflexes: Unless your animal has a reach that is greater than 5 feet, it is not likely to make many attacks of opportunity. The value of this feat will depend on your GM's play style.

Diehard: This atrocious feat will let your animal companion continue to take turns while it is at a negative number of hit points. Seeing this as beneficial is shortsighted because when your companion continues to fight at negative hit points, it is one hit away from being dead.

Dodge: This feat grants a +1 dodge bonus to AC, which means it also helps out your companion's touch AC and combat maneuver defense, but it is unlikely to rescue a pitiful touch AC. Still, Dodge is the prerequisite for Mobility and Spring Attack.

Endurance: This feat grants several bonuses to relating to survival and over exertion, and allows sleeping in medium armor. This value of this feat depends completely on your GM's play style.

Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes: Animal companions are likely to have decent Fortitude and Reflex saving throws, but its Will save will be mediocre. Reflex is often considered the least important of the three saves, but investing in your companion's will help take advantage of its Evasion ability.

Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun: These feats improve your companion's ability to perform certain combat maneuvers, and eliminate the attack of opportunity that is normally provoked. Even though your companion's BAB will never be that high, a companion that becomes large will also end up with a significant bonus from high Strength score. Overrun is better than Bullrush overall because your companion can continue moving after the combat maneuver is resolved, and the target might be knocked prone.

Improved Initiative: The value of a bonus to initiative checks this feat grants depends on when your companion takes its turn in combat. Does it act on your hunter's turn, or does it get its own initiative roll?

Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack: These feats improve your companion's natural armor bonus and the size of the die used for one of its natural attacks. The Dodge and Power Attack feats are better choices overall, but these two can be taken multiple times.

Intimidating Prowess: The feat allows your animal companion to add its Strength modifier to Intimidate checks in addition to its Charisma modifier. Many animals have a great Strength, but all of them have a poor Charisma. This would be better if you could use Strength instead of Charisma. Furthermore, while the animal is allowed to put skill points into Intimidate, it's not a class skill so it doesn't get the +3 bonus.

Jumper: This feat allows your companion to treat all of its jumps as though it had a running start.

Lithe Attacker: This feat allows your companion to make attacks from cramped spots more easily. It has some steep prerequisites.

Mobility: This feat makes your companion harder to hit when its movement provokes an attack of opportunity. Since it has no way to heal itself aside from what every creature gets by sleeping, it will need the support of you and your allies. Any magical healing it receives will be healing that a party member is not getting. If it must provoke attacks in order to do its job, then avoiding taking damage will be less of a drain on the party's resources.

Multiattack: Your companion gains this as a bonus feat at 9th level. Some companions gain nothing from this because they do not have any secondary attacks, but some get to decrease the -5 penalty for such attacks to -2. Companions with less than three natural attacks instead get to make one additional attack with a -5 penalty.

Narrow Frame: This feat eliminates the penalties your companion would suffer when it is squeezing, which is important for a large companion.

Power Attack: This feat allows your animal to accept an attack roll penalty in order to gain a bonus to the damage roll. There is some convincing math illustrating that that this can lead to dealing less damage in the long run, but higher individual damage rolls are pretty exciting and your teamwork feats (among other things) can help to offset the attack penalty. A bite attack is treated as a two-handed weapon when it doesn't use any other natural attacks.

Run: This feat allows your animal to run up to 5 times its speed instead of 4, but it does not increase its base speed. It's another one of those feats that definitely does something, but it's something that never comes up in a normal game.

Spring Attack: This feat allows your companion to move up to an enemy, make an attack, and then move away again. Many animals should avoid this because making a full attack with natural weapons is a better option, but some animals only have one natural attack and this is much better option for them.

Stable Gallop: This is a feat for your companion that benefits your hunter directly if you are mounted on your companion. It reduces the attack penalties for mounted archery and grants a bonus to concentration checks made while riding.

Sure Footed: This feat grants your companion a bonus on Acrobatics checks and Reflex saves made to avoid falling, and allows it to move unhindered on slopes or stairs.

Toughness: This feat grants your companion one extra hit points per hit die. Being able to survive one extra attack can make the difference in a fight. Remember that animal companions gain hit dice at a reduced rate. When your hunter has 20 levels, your companion will have only 16 hit dice.

Valiant Steed: This feat grants your animal a +4 bonus on saving throws against fear and emotion effects, and makes it easier for your hunter to compel his companion to do things it normally wouldn't. This is important because Will is your companion's worst saving throw.

Weapon Finesse: This feat allows your companion to use its Dexterity modifier for attack rolls instead of Strength. It still has to use its Strength for damage rolls though. If your companion has a low Strength then this feat is basically a requirement. Remember that you can't choose this feat as your companion's first feat.

Weapon Focus: This feat grants your companion a +1 bonus on attacks rolls with one specific kind of natural weapon chosen at the time the feat is gained. Make sure to choose a natural weapon that your companion can use more than once per round. For example, an animal with

the Rake ability can make four claw attacks when it grapples an enemy.

OTHER FEATS

Below are some good feats for your companion that has an Intelligence of 3 or more.

SKILLS

Animals have very few skill points, and are allowed to spend them on only a handful of different skills. Spread the around the points if you can to take advantage of the +3 bonus for being trained in a class skill.

Acrobatics: Most animal companions have at least a small Dexterity bonus, and even a single skill point will allow it to leap over small obstacles when they need to.

Climb: Most animal companions have at least a small Strength bonus, and some of them have a climb speed. This is worth at least one skill point just in case.

Escape Artist: Some animal companions just don't have the BAB and Strength to be able to break free once they have been caught in a grapple. The Agile Combat Maneuvers feat could help, and so could this skill. The only probable is that you will need to invest all or most of its skill points to be decent at it.

Fly: Put some points in here if your companion has a fly speed. If not, then you probably shouldn't.

Intimidate: This is not a class skill for your companion so it doesn't get the +3 bonus, and animals have poor Charisma scores. If your companion is large and has the Intimidating Prowess feat, it might be reasonable with this skill but still not outstanding.

Linguistics: You will need to raise your companion's Intelligence score to 3 in order to put a skill point here, but doing so will let you choose one language that it can understand and read. It still cannot speak though.

Perception: Lets your companion see danger before bad things happen. In a way you get to roll Perception checks twice in the right circumstances.

Stealth: Your companion might never be good enough at this skill to hide from seriously threats unless it is small, but putting a point in here could allow it to hide from townsfolk and such.

Survival: This is not a class skill for your companion so it doesn't get the +3 bonus. That is a real shame considering that your companion has probably lived outdoor its whole life. It has at least a small Wisdom bonus, and tracking will be easier if it has the Scent ability, so points spend here are not a complete waste.

Swim: Most animal companions have at least a small Strength bonus, and some of them have a swim speed. This is worth at least one skill point just in case.

TRICKS

All animals are capable of learning three tricks per point of Intelligence. For most this means six tricks, but for many aquatics animals it means three and for vermin it means zero. Once an animal has learned a trick, you can make it use the specified action with a DC 10 Handle Animal check. It can use other tricks too, but the DC is 25.

But an animal companions is no normal animal. Their master gains a +4 bonus on Handle Animal checks and the companion learns one additional trick, plus one for every three "druid" levels that the master has. For every four Hit Dice the companion has, one of its ability scores can be raised by 1, including Intelligence. This also raises the number of tricks it can learn - even for vermin. However, raising a companion's Intelligence to 3 or giving it the ability to understand speech does not negate the need for Handle Animal checks.

The companion of a hunter has additional features. It gains a few extra tricks as levels are gained in addition to those previously mentioned, and they can learn Hunter's Tricks from the ranger class's skirmisher archetype. The rules do not specify if all Hunter's Tricks can be learned, or only those that mention animal companions. In essence, are you or your companion treated as the "ranger"? Until this is clarified, you will have to talk to your GM about it.

You can train an animal for a general purpose, which just means that it has a group of skills that cater to a whatever job it has, such as hunting, pulling heavy loads, or entertaining a crowd. For most animal companions, the Combat Trained general purpose will do the job. It includes the following tricks: attack, come, defend, down, guard, and heel. But you can also customize this if you like. For example, if you plan on never leaving your companion behind to guard an area, then you could change the "guard" trick to something else by training it for week and succeeding on a Handle Animal check. Read through the list of tricks carefully and decide which ones it will need to best serve you.

It is entirely possible that your GM will not require Handle Animal skills checks every time you want the animal to do something. Maybe because it delays the game or maybe because the command seems simple enough. If this is the case, then the exact tricks in your companion's repertoire becomes less important.

Over the years, the number of tricks available has increased and this creates a small complication: each time a new trick comes into existence, is it implied that an animal cannot do that thing without the trick? This is another aspect of animal companions that will depend on your GM's thoughts on the matter.

ANIMAL FOCUS

A hunter isn't the only one who benefits from his Animal Focus class feature. His companion gets it as well. The rating that a particular focus has when your companion uses it is not always the same, because unlike you the companion's focus has an unlimited duration. This means that a favorite focus can be switched on at all times and then switched out when a situation arises.

Bat: Darkvision is good for any creature. Animals don't have it, but vermin do. At high levels, the short range Blindsense could save your life.

Bear: An increase to Constitution can help your companion live longer by increasing Fortitude saves, hit points, and stabilization checks, but could also end its life very quickly. If you switch to different focus, all of these extra hit points go away. At 8th level that means 16 hit points, and at 15th level that means 45. Unlike the hunter, a companion's animal focus has no duration so these extra hit points can only be lost by using an action to end it.

Bull: An increase to Strength can help any companion. It improves melee attack and damage rolls, carrying capacity, combat maneuvers, checks to break things, and a couple of skills.

Falcon: This bonus to Perception grants a significant boost to an important skill. It is usually safe to keep this focus active any time nothing is happening so that your companion is ready to notice danger before it happens. If combat or something else happens, you can always switch to a different focus.

Frog: The bonus to swimming will help non-aquatic companions when an aquatic hazard must be dealt with. The bonus to jumping will help overcome certain obstacles. This focus can be activated when needed.

Monkey: A bonus to climbing will help companions without a climb or fly speed when the appropriate hazard appears. This focus can be activated at those times.

Mouse: Once your hunter is 3rd level, your companion will have evasion and not need this animal focus until 12th level when it grants improved evasion, which your companion gains permanently at 15th level. So again there is a small gap where this focus can help.

Owl: This bonus to Stealth grants a significant boost to a useful skill, particularly if you can anticipate when it is time to make important check.

Snake: This animal focus grants bonuses pertain to attacks of opportunity. For the most part, only large bipedal companions will have reach, and so this focus is good for them. Other companion will only be able to take attacks of opportunity if the GM surrenders one. It can also grant a bonus to AC against such attacks for when your companion need to provoke them.

Stag: This bonus to speed is pretty small at low levels but eventually becomes a significant increase to speed.

Tiger: An increase to Dexterity will help any creature, even those that rely on Strength for their attacks. It increases AC, initiative checks, Reflex saves, and several skills.

Wolf: The scent ability can be useful at low levels when you need to track a creature, but many companions already have the scent ability. As you gain levels and the range increases, scent can help your companion notice invisible enemies.

ARCHETYPES

There are four archetypes available to an animal companion. They function just as an archetype for a normal character: some of the normal features are lost and new features are gained in their place.

BODYGUARD

This companion specializes in protecting its master. From 1st level, several feats are added to the list of those normally available and the companion and master gain the benefit of the Alertness feat. As you gain levels, it always act during surprise rounds, can continue to protect its master when it has less than 0 hit points, and gains Uncanny Dodge.

CHARGER

This companion specializes in serving as an armored mount. 1st level, several feats are added to the list of those normally available and the companion and Intimidate becomes one of its class skills. This means that putting a skill point in the skill grants it a +3 bonus. As you gain levels, it becomes more more proficient at wearing barding and carrying greater weights, becomes immune to fatigue, and can shrug off the effects of harmful effects from Will and Fortitude saving throws.

RACER

This companion specializes in moving quickly. From 1st level, several feats are added to the list of those normally available and its movement speed increases. As you gain levels, it gains the ability to sprint up to 10 times its normal speed.

TOTEM GUIDE

This companion gains magical abilities. Beginning at 3rd level, it can cast the *guidance* orison at-will and can sacrifice your spell slots in order to cast certain divination spells. As you gains levels, it gains the ability to speak with you and other animals, gains Eldritch Claws as a bonus feat, and gains improved offense and defense against incorporeal creatures.

EQUIPMENT

Animals with different shapes are capable of using different types of equipment, and the types are very specifically defined. Serpentine shape and vermin companions can use the fewest types, apes can wear everything a human can, and the rest of the fall somewhere in between.

Amulets: Any companion except serpentine and vermin can wear items that occupy the neck slot. Unless you want to continually casts spells in order to make its attacks magical, you will eventually want to invest in an amulet of mighty fists for the enhancement bonus to the attack and damage rolls of its natural weapons. Alternately, the dire collar allows your companion to increase in size once per day.

Armor: Any companion except serpentine and vermin can wear armor. As early as you can, get your companion proficiency in light armor and the best light armor you can afford. This armor bonus stacks with an animal's natural armor. Healing your companion will be a burden to your party, so avoiding taking damage is important.

Belts: Most animal companion can wear a magic belt, which will most often be used to increase its already impressive physical ability scores. Even if it can't wear a belt, the same item slot can be used for a magic saddle.

Cloaks: Animals with four limbs, excluding those with fins or wings, can wear items that occupy the shoulder slot. The obvious choice here is a cloak of resistance to increase its saving throws.

Iron Stones: An animal companion can use these, as long as it has an Intelligence of 3 or more.

Saddlebags: These aren't magic items, but at low level you are likely to carry more mundane items to overcome problems. If your companion has a higher carrying capacity than you, it should help to carry the load. The camping equipment at the very least.

Weapons: Only avians and bipeds are capable of grasping weapons, and even then viability is up to your GM. Proficiency is a problem since each specific kind of weapon requires a feat, and the companion is probably better off using its natural attacks.