# A Comprehensive Analysis of the Dracotail Archetype: A Deep Dive into its Core Mechanics, Variants, and Competitive Outlook

## I. Introduction: The Dracotail Core Philosophy

### 1.1 Archetype Identity

The Dracotail archetype emerges from the *Justice Hunters* (JUSH) set, presenting a unique and counter-intuitive approach to the game of Yu-Gi-Oh!.1 Unlike many contemporary strategies that rely on a linear, multi-summon combo to establish a formidable end board, Dracotail focuses on achieving a similar level of disruption through a more conservative, resource-efficient methodology.1 The core philosophy revolves around making a minimal number of high-impact actions and leveraging them into powerful Fusion Monsters. This is facilitated by a central, self-sustaining loop: using the archetype's Main Deck monsters as Fusion Material to set key Spell and Trap cards directly from the deck, which in turn provide recurring disruption and resource replenishment.1

The deck's primary objective is to execute strategic Fusion Summons, not as a final power play, but as a mechanism to activate the secondary effects of its monsters and assemble a backfield of disruptive Traps. This approach allows the archetype to build a robust board state with few initial card commitments. For instance, the archetype's Quick-Effect Fusion Summons, found on cards like Dracotail Faimena and Dracotail Mululu, are designed to be deployed during the opponent's turn, making the deck highly interactive and difficult to predict.1 This constant pressure and ability to generate value on both player turns defines its unique identity.

### 1.2 Positioning in the Meta

Within the competitive landscape of the post-DOOD (Doom of Dimensions) format, the Dracotail archetype has established itself as a significant contender.2 While other emerging strategies may struggle with specific hand traps or board-breaking cards, Dracotail's design provides a remarkable degree of resilience.3 The deck is particularly noted for its powerful "turn zero plays," which allow a player to start setting up their defensive measures before their first turn even begins.1 This proactive disruption, combined with a strong ability to maintain card advantage over the course of a long duel, has led many to argue that Dracotail is one of the strongest decks in the current format, perhaps even surpassing other popular archetypes like "Yummy" in terms of statistical performance and reliability.3 Its inherent flexibility allows it to adapt to a wide range of meta environments, which is a key factor in its success.

## II. The Dracotail Arsenal: Core Card-by-Card Analysis

The effectiveness of the Dracotail archetype is rooted in the synergistic effects of its core cards. Each piece of the engine plays a specific role in enabling Fusion Summons and creating a continuous cycle of resource generation and disruption.

### 2.1 Main Deck Monsters

The Main Deck monsters are the engine's foundation. Dracotail Lukias serves as the primary Normal Summon and a vital searcher, allowing a player to add any "Dracotail" monster from the deck to the hand to initiate their combo.1

Dracotail Faimena is a core Fusion enabler with a Quick Effect that allows for Fusion Summons during either player's Main Phase by discarding itself.1 This discard cost also makes it a valuable utility card for other hand-activated effects.

Dracotail Mululu provides another Quick-Effect Fusion Summon, but its specific function is to make "Dracotail" Fusion Monsters and provide a crucial non-targeting monster negation when used as material.1

Beyond the combo enablers, the deck includes monsters with specific disruptive roles. Dracotail Urgula and Dracotail Pan are designed as board-breaking tools; when used as Fusion Material, Urgula sets a Spell/Trap and destroys one on the opponent's field, while Pan does the same but destroys a monster.1 The non-targeting nature of these effects is a significant competitive advantage against decks that rely on cards that evade targeting. These monsters, along with

Lukias and Faimena, all share a common effect to set a "Dracotail" Spell/Trap from the deck when used as Fusion Material, which is the cornerstone of the deck's economy.1

### 2.2 Spells & Traps

The Dracotail Spells and Traps are critical for initiating plays and providing disruption. Rahu Dracotail is an exceptionally powerful Fusion Spell that enables a player to Fusion Summon using monsters from the hand, deck, or field, enabling explosive "turn zero plays".1 This ability to fuse from the deck is a primary driver of the deck's consistency and ability to set up its combo without drawing the optimal hand.

Ketu Dracotail is a versatile searcher that can also function as a Fusion Spell when an opponent has a monster on the field, making it an excellent option for a go-second strategy.1

The deck's primary sources of disruption are the Trap cards, Dracotail Flame and Dracotail Horn. Flame provides a Spell/Trap negation, while Horn can bounce an attack position monster back to the hand.1 Both of these Traps also share a powerful secondary effect: they can recycle a "Dracotail" card from the graveyard or banished zone back to the bottom of the deck to draw a new card.1 This recycling mechanism is crucial for maintaining a healthy card economy and ensuring the deck's longevity.

### 2.3 Extra Deck Monsters

The archetype's Extra Deck is focused on two key Fusion Monsters that serve as the payoff for the Main Deck's engine. Dracotail Arthalion is a formidable boss monster that can return monsters from the field or graveyard to the hand, with the number of cards bounced determined by the number of materials used from the hand for its Fusion Summon.1 This effect provides a non-targeting form of board control and is invaluable for recycling key monsters or hand traps.

Dracotail Gulamel is the other core Fusion, and it is designed for proactive destruction, capable of destroying cards on the field in response to the activation of other "Dracotail" card effects.1 The synergy between these two Fusions and the rest of the archetype is what gives the deck its power.

The Dracotail engine is fundamentally designed to overcome the inherent card disadvantage typically associated with Fusion Summoning. A standard Fusion Summon requires two or more cards (materials) to create a single card (the Fusion Monster), often resulting in a net loss of resources. The Dracotail archetype subverts this dynamic through a core design principle: its Main Deck monsters, when used as Fusion Material, replace themselves by setting a "Dracotail" Spell/Trap card directly from the deck.1 This crucial mechanic transforms a card-disadvantageous action into a card-neutral one, allowing the deck to maintain its hand size and board presence.

The economic model is further reinforced by the Traps it sets. Once Dracotail Flame or Dracotail Horn are activated, they can recycle a spent "Dracotail" card from the graveyard back into the deck to draw a new card. This completes a closed-loop system: the Fusion Summon consumes resources but sets a new one from the deck, and that new card, when used, recycles the spent resource and draws a replacement.1 This cycle ensures that the deck does not burn through its resources in a single, explosive turn. Instead, it creates a sustainable economy of disruption and recursion that is difficult for opponents to outlast, giving Dracotail a powerful grind game and exceptional resilience in prolonged duels.3

Table: Dracotail Core Card Effects and Roles

| **Card Name** | **Card Type/Attribute** | **Primary Role** | **Effect Summary** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dracotail Lukias | Monster (Spellcaster/EARTH) | Searcher & Fusion Material | Adds a "Dracotail" monster from Deck to hand; sets a Dracotail S/T when used as Fusion Material.1 |
| Dracotail Faimena | Monster (Spellcaster/LIGHT) | Fusion Enabler | Quick Effect Fusion Summon from hand/field; sets a Dracotail S/T when used as Fusion Material.1 |
| Dracotail Mululu | Monster (Dragon/DARK) | Quick Effect Fusion & Disruption | Quick Effect Fusion Summon; sets a Dracotail S/T and negates an opponent's monster when used as Fusion Material.1 |
| Dracotail Urgula | Monster (Dragon/EARTH) | Resource & Backrow Removal | Recycles Dracotail Spellcasters; sets a Dracotail S/T and destroys an opponent's S/T when used as Fusion Material.1 |
| Dracotail Pan | Monster (Dragon/EARTH) | Resource & Monster Removal | When used as Fusion Material, sets a Dracotail S/T and destroys an opponent's monster.1 |
| Rahu Dracotail | Spell | Fusion Spell | Fusion Summons using materials from hand, deck, or field.1 |
| Ketu Dracotail | Spell | Searcher & Fusion Enabler | Searches a Dracotail monster; Fusion Summons if opponent has a monster.1 |
| Dracotail Flame | Trap | Spell/Trap Negation | Negates a Spell and draws by recycling a Dracotail card.1 |
| Dracotail Horn | Trap | Bounce & Draw | Returns an attack position monster to hand and draws by recycling a Dracotail card.1 |
| Dracotail Arthalion | Fusion Monster | Board Rebalancing & Disruption | Returns monsters to hand equal to materials used from hand.1 |
| Dracotail Gulamel | Fusion Monster | Interruption & Destruction | Destroys cards on the field in response to Dracotail effects.1 |

## III. Synergistic Engines and Competitive Variants

A significant hallmark of the Dracotail archetype is its "splashable" nature, which has given rise to numerous competitive variants.2 The core Dracotail engine functions as a highly flexible framework, allowing it to be integrated with various external archetypes and engines to address specific strategic needs.

### 3.1 The Pure Dracotail Build

The purest form of the deck focuses exclusively on the core Dracotail engine, maximizing its internal synergies and recursion. This build is known for its high consistency and strong grind game, relying on the loop of Fusion Summoning, setting Traps, and recycling resources to out-grind the opponent.5 A deck profile showcasing this approach includes the core Dracotail monsters and spells, complemented by a suite of generic hand traps to bolster its disruptive capabilities.6 This variant is a testament to the power of the Dracotail engine on its own, demonstrating that it does not need a massive secondary engine to be effective.

### 3.2 Dracotail & K9

The Dracotail and K9 variant incorporates the K9 engine, primarily K9-17 Izuna and K9-00 Lupis, to enhance the deck's turn-zero plays and augment its proactive disruption.1 This synergy is particularly potent as the K9 cards can bait out hand traps from the opponent, creating a safe path for the Dracotail combo to resolve.7 The K9 engine also enables a player to summon

Dracotail Mululu to the field in response to an opponent's actions, which provides a layer of protection against mass-removal effects like Nibiru, the Primal Being.7 This variant sacrifices some consistency for an increased ability to interfere with the opponent before the duel even truly begins.

### 3.3 Dracotail & Shaddoll

The Shaddoll variant is a popular choice for its ability to create a potent floodgate board. By integrating cards like Shaddoll Beast and Shaddoll Squamata, the deck gains the ability to Fusion Summon El Shaddoll Winda.5

Winda is a powerful floodgate that limits both players to one Special Summon per turn, which can single-handedly lock out a large number of combo-oriented decks in the current meta.1 The combination of Dracotail's innate disruptive capabilities with

Winda's oppressive summon lock creates a hybrid strategy that is difficult for many decks to overcome.

### 3.4 Dracotail & Branded

The Dracotail and Branded variant is noted for bridging the two archetypes to access the formidable Fusion pool of the Branded engine.8 By using a powerful Fusion Spell like

Branded Fusion, the deck gains access to a more aggressive and explosive suite of plays that the pure build may lack.1 This variant can easily summon powerful generic Fusion Monsters such as

Guardian Chimera and Red-Eyes Dark Dragoon, adding a new dimension of destruction and control to the deck's repertoire.1 The ability to pivot into a Branded strategy from a Dracotail starter provides the deck with a degree of strategic flexibility that is difficult for opponents to anticipate.

### 3.5 Other Variants

The deck's versatility is further highlighted by the mention of other successful variants, including Magistus, Dragonmaid, and Invoked.2 The Magistus variant, for example, can utilize cards like

Crowley, the Gifted of Magistus to enable additional Fusion plays and board presence.6 These diverse options underscore a fundamental aspect of the deck's design: its core is not an end in itself but a foundation for a larger, adaptable strategy.

The strength of the Dracotail archetype is not derived from a single, rigid game plan but from its inherent modularity. The Dracotail core serves as a dynamic and efficient engine that can be seamlessly combined with various external archetypes. This design allows the deck to be fine-tuned to adapt to a shifting metagame. The existence of variants such as the Shaddoll lockdown, the K9 proactive disruption, and the Branded explosive power demonstrates a fundamental principle of the deck's construction.

A pilot can analyze the current competitive environment and select the engine that best addresses the expected threats. For example, if a player anticipates facing decks that rely on a high volume of Special Summons, the Shaddoll variant would be an optimal choice. Conversely, if a meta is dominated by decks that are fragile to early disruption, a K9-oriented build would be more effective. This strategic adaptability makes Dracotail a highly skill-intensive deck at a competitive level, as success is not solely dependent on memorizing a single combo line but on having a deep understanding of the format and the foresight to build the optimal version for a specific tournament environment. This is a crucial distinction that separates Dracotail from more linear combo decks.

Table: Synergistic Engines and Their Strategic Value

| **Engine/Variant** | **Core Synergies** | **Strategic Advantage** | **Key Cards** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pure Dracotail | Core engine consistency, recurring traps. | High consistency, sustainable grind game, strong turn 0 presence.5 | Dracotail core engine cards. |
| K9 | Provides turn-zero disruption. | Proactive turn-zero plays to bait out opponent's hand traps and set up a powerful board.5 | K9-17 Izuna, K9-00 Lupis.1 |
| Shaddoll | Provides access to floodgate monsters. | Ability to set up a game-winning floodgate (El Shaddoll Winda) and gain access to powerful Fusion effects.1 | Shaddoll Beast, Shaddoll Squamata, Shaddoll Hedgehog.6 |
| Branded | Access to a powerful Fusion pool and Fusion Spells. | Adds explosive combo lines and access to powerful Fusion monsters like Guardian Chimera and Red-Eyes Dark Dragoon.1 | Branded Fusion, Ad Libitum.8 |
| Magistus | Additional Fusion options and extenders. | Provides additional Fusion Summoning capabilities and board presence.2 | Crowley, the Gifted of Magistus, Zoroa, etc..6 |

## IV. A Dracotail Pilot's Manual: Combos & Play Patterns

### 4.1 Core Combo Lines

The primary strength of the Dracotail deck lies in its ability to generate multiple disruptions from minimal card investment. A common and highly effective starting point is the one-card combo from a Normal Summon of Dracotail Lukias.

A typical sequence would begin by Normal Summoning Lukias, activating its effect to search for another "Dracotail" monster, often Dracotail Urgula.12 With

Urgula now in hand, a player can use the Quick Effect of a card like Dracotail Faimena to Fusion Summon Dracotail Gulamel, using Lukias and Urgula as materials from the field.12 The critical part of this sequence is the simultaneous activation of the secondary effects of both

Lukias and Urgula, which will set Dracotail Flame and Dracotail Horn directly from the deck.12 This single sequence turns one Normal Summon and two other cards into a field with

Gulamel and two set Traps, all of which provide disruption on the opponent's turn.

More advanced combos, particularly in the Branded variant, can utilize powerful Fusion Spells like Rahu Dracotail to create a more aggressive end board. These lines allow the deck to bypass certain hand traps and establish a stronger presence by leveraging the fusion materials from the deck and graveyard.1

### 4.2 Chain Management & Interruption Strategy

Effective piloting of the Dracotail deck requires a nuanced understanding of chain management. The mandatory effects of the Main Deck Dracotail monsters when used as Fusion Material can be leveraged to "chain block" other crucial effects.3 By placing the mandatory effect of, for example,

Dracotail Mululu (negating an opponent's monster) as Chain Link 1, a player can protect its more vulnerable, optional effect from being negated by an opponent's hand trap. This strategic sequencing makes the deck's combos difficult to interrupt with common answers.

The deck's strength is also defined by its Quick-Effect plays. The Quick-Effect Fusion Summons of Faimena and Mululu allow a player to disrupt the opponent's turn at opportune moments.1 A Dracotail pilot can wait for the opponent to commit to their own plays before Fusion Summoning a disruptive monster like

Dracotail Gulamel or Dracotail Arthalion, which can destroy or bounce key cards and stop the opponent's momentum.

## V. End Board Analysis and Strategic Weaknesses

### 5.1 The Optimal Board

A typical optimal end board for a Dracotail deck is not a single, imposing monster, but a field with multiple layers of interaction.13 It will commonly feature a

Dracotail Arthalion and a Dracotail Gulamel, supported by two set Dracotail Traps, Dracotail Flame and Dracotail Horn.3 This setup provides a powerful array of disruptions: a non-targeting monster bounce from

Arthalion, a non-targeting spell/trap negation from Flame, and a monster bounce from Horn.1 Depending on the variant, the board may also include a floodgate like

El Shaddoll Winda or a generic Link Monster like Hieratic Seal of the Heavenly Spheres, which provides additional layers of control and recursion.6

### 5.2 Playing Against Dracotail

Despite its resilience, the Dracotail archetype is not without its vulnerabilities. While it can often play through common hand traps, it can be particularly susceptible to specific, targeted disruption.14 Negating the Normal Summon of

Dracotail Lukias with cards like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring or Effect Veiler can effectively cripple the deck's ability to initiate its core combo lines.14 Furthermore, since the deck's primary resource loop relies on its monsters being used as Fusion Material and on

Arthalion recycling cards from the graveyard, cards that banish or disrupt graveyard effects can be highly effective.14

Ghost Belle & Haunted Mansion is a strong choice against the deck's graveyard-activated effects, and Retaliating “C” can be a powerful side deck option.14

The Dracotail archetype presents a unique tactical puzzle for opponents. The deck is notably resilient to generic, high-impact cards that are effective against many other top-tier strategies. For example, the deck is "almost invulnerable" to hand traps that punish multiple Special Summons, such as Maxx "C", because its core play revolves around a single Normal Summon and a few Quick-Effect Fusion Summons.3 The deck is also highly resistant to board-wiping cards like

Evenly Matched, as a pilot can chain the effect of a Dracotail Trap to return one of their Fusion Monsters to the Extra Deck, thereby saving it from destruction and retaining a core resource for the following turn.14

However, this resilience is counterbalanced by a susceptibility to surgical, targeted strikes. The deck's engine is not an unbreakable wall but a complex machine with a few key choke points. Negating the initial Normal Summon of Dracotail Lukias can prevent the deck from ever getting started.15 Similarly, disrupting the graveyard recycling effects of

Dracotail Arthalion or the Traps can stop the deck from replenishing its resources and outlasting the opponent.14 An opponent cannot rely on a generic strategy; they must have a deep understanding of the Dracotail engine to identify and disrupt its specific vulnerabilities. This creates a fascinating and highly tactical matchup where success depends on a player's knowledge of the Dracotail archetype's intricate mechanics.

## VI. Deck Profiles and Card Choices

### 6.1 A Sample Competitive Deck Profile

A competitive Dracotail deck profile is a fluid entity, highly dependent on the chosen engine and the anticipated meta. However, a representative list from the April 2025 TCG format illustrates a common build that incorporates a mix of the core engine and synergistic tech cards.

Example Competitive Dracotail Deck Profile (April 2025 TCG Format)

| **Section** | **Card Name** | **Count** | **Archetype/Engine** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monsters (Main Deck)** | Dracotail Lukias | 3 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Dracotail Faimena | 3 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Dracotail Mululu | 3 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Dracotail Urgula | 2 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Dracotail Pan | 2 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Blazing Cartesia, the Virtuous | 2-3 | Fusion Extender 1 |
|  | Mulcharmy Fuwalos | 3 | Mulcharmy Engine 6 |
|  | Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring | 3 | Hand Trap 6 |
|  | Droll & Lock Bird | 3 | Hand Trap 6 |
|  | Nibiru, the Primal Being | 2 | Hand Trap 6 |
|  | Effect Veiler | 2 | Hand Trap 6 |
| **Spells (Main Deck)** | Rahu Dracotail | 3 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Ketu Dracotail | 3 | Dracotail Core 6 |
| **Traps (Main Deck)** | Dracotail Flame | 1 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Dracotail Horn | 1 | Dracotail Core 6 |
| **Extra Deck** | Dracotail Arthalion | 3 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | Dracotail Gulamel | 2 | Dracotail Core 6 |
|  | El Shaddoll Winda | 1 | Shaddoll Engine 6 |
|  | S:P Little Knight | 1 | Link Monster 6 |
|  | Hieratic Seal of the Heavenly Spheres | 1 | Link Monster 6 |
|  | Mysterion the Dragon Crown | 1 | Generic Fusion 6 |
|  | Secreterion Dragon | 1 | Generic Fusion 6 |

### 6.2 Rationale for Tech Cards

The inclusion of non-archetype tech cards is crucial for optimizing the Dracotail deck. Blazing Cartesia, the Virtuous is a popular choice due to its Quick-Effect Fusion Summoning capability and its type synergy as a Spellcaster, which works well with cards like Spirit with Eyes of Blue for additional plays.1

King of the Swamp is another powerful addition, as its Fusion Substitute effect enables access to a wider range of generic boss monsters, including Red-Eyes Dark Dragoon and Guardian Chimera.1

The deck also makes excellent use of monster-based hand traps like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring, Effect Veiler, and Droll & Lock Bird.6 These cards serve not only as standard disruption but also as versatile Fusion Materials. Furthermore, the deck’s ability to recycle monsters from the graveyard with

Dracotail Arthalion allows it to retrieve used hand traps, effectively turning them into recurring sources of disruption and card advantage.16 This synergy with monster-based non-engine cards is a key reason for the deck's consistent performance.

## VII. Conclusion and Future Outlook

### 7.1 Summary of Strengths

The Dracotail archetype stands out in the current competitive environment due to its unique design and powerful mechanics. The deck’s core strength lies in its ability to generate significant disruption from minimal actions, utilizing an efficient and self-sustaining resource loop.3 Its Fusion Monsters and Traps provide a variety of powerful, non-targeting disruptions that are effective against a wide range of meta decks.1 This reliability and consistency, coupled with the deck’s exceptional resilience and strong grind game, cement its position as a top-tier contender.

### 7.2 The Competitive Landscape

The debate regarding whether Dracotail is the "best" deck in the format is a nuanced one. While some data suggests that its consistent performance and reliability make it statistically superior to archetypes like "Yummy," the argument is often tempered by the observation that decks like "Yummy" may possess a higher ceiling for their optimal boards.3 However, the Dracotail archetype’s true power is its adaptability. Its modularity and "splashable" nature allow it to be precisely tailored to combat the specific threats of a given tournament meta, whether that involves creating a floodgate board with the Shaddoll engine or adding explosive power with the Branded engine.5 This strategic flexibility may be a more valuable asset than a single, all-powerful combo, as it allows the deck to consistently perform well across different competitive environments.

### 7.3 A Forward-Looking Perspective

The future outlook for Dracotail appears promising. The deck has already received support, such as Dracotail Pirical and Dracotail Sting, which further bolster its ability to recover resources and interact with the opponent.15 While

Pirical may not be a new starter, its recovery effect reinforces the deck’s grind game, and Sting provides a valuable double banish option.15 The deck’s continued success will depend on its ability to adapt to a changing banlist and the introduction of new archetypes. However, its foundational design, which emphasizes sustainability over one-time power plays, suggests that Dracotail is well-positioned to remain a relevant and powerful force in the meta for the foreseeable future.

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