Dead-Cat Bounce

A German-style trading board-game design played with a standard pack of cards.

Concept

dead-cat bounce (noun)
1. ***Slang.*** *A temporary recovery in stock prices after a steep decline, often resulting from the purchase of securities that have been sold short.*

Dead-Cat Bounce is a trading game played with a pack of cards and some tokens to act as money. It is loosely based around the concept of buying and selling stocks and shares. It falls into the Rummy family of games, so has melds of sets and runs, which in this case represent the stocks and shares. Dead-Cat Bounce expands on the basic rummy game, turning into a trading game, by introducing money, dividends, tax and hostile takeovers.

Overview

Dead Cat Bounce is a rummy-style game crossed with a trading-style board-game.

The aim is to collect runs of cards, as the bank pays out money to the players with the longest.

However, players can buy up the runs of other players, so unless you can protect the runs you have built, you may lose them at any minute. The way to protect your runs is to lay extra money on them, making them pricier to buy. But, as the protection money is paid to the bank and must be replenished every turn, it soon becomes expensive to maintain too many.

To discourage players from hiding valuable cards in their hands, they are made to pay a tax each turn for any cards they hold.

To add an aspect of anticipation and the illusion of planning, DCB has a flop where cards-for-sale can linger just long enough to become part of someone's plan.

There is an interesting balance to find between protectionism and extravagance in DCB. You can lose a prized run one turn, only to buy it back bigger and better a turn later. It's a game where it's better not to get too attached to a plan, run or suit as cards tend to fly around the table. It's also a hilarious way to lose friends and family members.

Like most trading games, the end-goal is money, not collections, so, at the end of the game, the player with the most money wins.

Rules

Equipment
- A pack, or two, of standard cards.
- Tokens, approximately 25 per person.

Players
- It works well with 4 players and one pack of cards.
- You can add extra suits ("penny stocks") for more players, e.g. add another suit of clubs for 5 players, further add another suit of diamonds for 6 players.

Set-up
1. Shuffle the pack.
2. Deal each player 2 cards.
3. Place the pack in the middle of the table, face down, slightly to one side to allow space for four cards in a row next to it.
4. Give each player 7 tokens as starting capital.
5. Store the other tokens together as the 'bank'.

Order of play
- Clockwise or anti-clockwise, it makes no difference.
- The last player to play probably has an advantage.
  - Experienced adults: next of dealer.
  - Mixed ages: youngest goes last.
  - Mixed experience: new player goes last.

Start

1. Deal a three card 'flop' to the right of the pack and turn them over for everyone to see.
2. Keep a space to the right of the flop for the discard pile
3. The first player starts their turn. As they won't have any sets or runs, any fees to pay, etc. they can go straight to buying stock.

Turns

DCB is a turn-based game. Each player takes their turn to play, and play passes from one player to the next in order around the table.

Turns have phases that each player completes in order:

1. Housekeeping
2. Trade
3. Protect your investments
4. Discard
5. Pay Tax

Housekeeping

In order:

1. **Pay your fees:** any tokens placed on your sets and runs are removed and placed in the bank.
2. **Replenish the stocks:** move any cards in the flop towards the discard pile on the right, fill in the gaps to the left to make sure there are 3 cards in the flop.
3. **Pay dividends:** Calculate dividends and pay the player from the bank (see dividends below).

Trade

In any order:

- **Buy New Stock:** Any cards in the flop can be bought at their *nominal price*
- **Trade With Other players:** Players are free to buy, sell and swap any cards they have on display or in their hand.
- **Hostile Takeover:** Players are free to buy any sets & runs on display by other players, as long as the full **inflated** price is paid

in-full.
  - **Put a card back on the market:** any card on display or in your hand, with a value of more than one, can be put back into the flop—_if there is a space in the flop for it_. The market will pay the nominal price minus an admin fee of 1 token.
  - **Sell to the bank:** any card on display or in your hand can be sold to the bank. The bank pays 1 token per card, even for Aces. You cannot sell a card you have just bought.
  - **Display a single royal card, or a two:** any card with a value of more than one can be placed onto the table to make a *singleton*, ready to start a run or a set.
  - **Build runs:** two or more cards in consecutive order and of the same suit can be placed onto the table to create a run. Cards can be added to the top or bottom of runs to lengthen them.
  - **Build sets:** two (a pair) or more cards of the same rank can be placed on the table. Cards can be added to sets to make them wider.
  - **Pay to see extra flop cards:** as long as there are less than 3 cards in the flop, you can spend one token per card to fill any. You can then buy them if you like, but have to pay the nominal price for them.

Protect your investments

1. **Inflate prices to protect your investments:** Place extra tokens onto any sets and runs you want to inflate the price of, to protect from hostile takeover.

Discard

There should always be a space in the flop at the end of your turn. If there are three cards in the flop, discard one.

1. Choose a card to be discarded, if you cannot discard without paying, the bank will discard for you (see below).

Pay Tax

1. A card that can be played on the table cannot be placed in your hand.
2. Cards held in your hand are taxed at one token per card, paid directly to the bank.
   - Taxes must be paid, if you don't have enough for tax,

something must be sold either to the bank (which pays one token per card), or to another player (who might be more generous).
3. Once tax has been paid, your turn is over and play passes to the next player.

Nominal prices

These are the standard prices of cards, used when buying anything from the bank and when the bank pays out dividends.

Rank	Tokens
3–T	1
2, J	2
Q	3
K	4
A	5

Dividends

– The bank pays dividends for any stock (runs, sets and 2s) you have on display at the start of your turn and bonuses for capturing certain markets.
– Cards held in your hand do not pay dividends.
– Stock lost to a hostile takeover mid-round does not pay you a dividend. Any dividend will go to the buyer on their turn (if they still own it).
– Dividends are paid using this formula:
  – Price of most valuable card + 1 per extra card in set or run.
– Examples:

Run	Sum	Tokens
K–Q–J–T	4+3	7
Single 2	2	2
2–2	2+1	3
3–3–3	1+2	3
A–A–A–A	5+3	8
A–2–3–4	5+3	8

| 6–5–4–3 | 1+3 | 4 |
| 6–5–4–3–2 | 2+4 | 6 |

- **Bonuses:** The bank also pays the following bonuses, 1 token for the player who uniquely displays:
    - Highest card of a suit.
    - Most cards of a suit.
    - Longest run, out of *all* runs, of *all* suits.

Buying New Stock

- Any cards in the flop are available for purchase
- To buy a card from the flop, pay the nominal fee to the bank
- A card can be placed in your hand, added to a run or set on the table or used to make a set or run on the table.

Singletons

- Royal cards and 2s can be put on display by themselves to make a 'singleton'.
- You can add cards to a singleton two to convert it to a set or a run.
    - A singleton is not considered a run or a set, so cannot win a length bonus.
- Royal singletons pay a dividend of 1 token
- A single 2 plays a dividend of 2 tokens
- You can only have one singleton of the same rank.
- You can take a 2 from the bottom of a run and make it a singleton

Runs & Sets

- During your turn, you can place as many cards as you like, from your hand, flop, trades or takeovers, onto the table to make sets and runs.
- **Runs:** are **two** or more cards **of the same suit** in consecutive order. So, 4–3, A–K–Q–J–T, 3–2—A, 2—A, are all valid runs.
    - Note that an ace can be low or high.
- **Sets:** are two or more cards of the same rank. So, 3–3, 4–4–4, 5–5–5–5 are all valid sets.
    - If you play with more than 4 suits, sets can be of more than 4 cards.

- **Dividends:** are paid out for a combination of rank and length. See the dividends section for more details.
- You can break your sets and runs up during your turn to make different sets or runs, place cards into your hand, put the cards back onto the market, or sell them back to the bank.

Hostile Takeovers

- Any set, run or 2, on display are for sale.
- Cards in your hand are not for sale.
- To buy a set or run you must buy every card in it, at its nominal price.
    - K–Q–J–T will cost 4+3+2+1 = 10 to buy
    - 2—2 will cost 2+2 = 4 to buy
    - 5—5–5 will cost 1+1+1 = 3 to buy
- If a run or set has extra tokens placed on it, their value is added to the price needed to buy the set. The extra tokens are not part of the purchase, so are handed to the bank.
- The full inflated price is paid by the buyer to the current owner.

Protecting your investments by inflating their value

- By default, anyone can buy anyone else's run or set for just the nominal price of all the cards in it.
- To protect against hostile takeovers, you can inflate the price of your runs and sets by adding tokens to them
- Place the tokens on top of the run so that they can be clearly seen (without also obscuring too much of the run, especially the top card)
- Each token adds one to the price of the run or set, so if you add three tokens to a run, it will cost three more tokens to buy it.
- The higher price is paid by the buyer and goes to you, the (possibly reluctant) seller
- As part of the transaction, the extra tokens are removed and given to the bank.
- The extra tokens last one full turn. If the runs make it back to your turn again without being bought, the tokens are spent and are given to the bank.
- Each turn, you need to place new tokens on the runs & sets you want to protect

Trade With Other players

- You can initiate a trade with another player at any point during the trading part of your turn
- You can take part in a trade at any point, if initiated by a player during their turn
- You cannot trade with another player unless it is yours, or the other player's, turn
- During a trade, players are free to:
    - Exchange cards for money at any price they mutually agree on.
    - Swap cards.
    - Any combination of the above.
- Trading should be kept short to keep the game moving.

Discards

- There must always be a space in the flop at the end of your turn, so that the next player gets a new card to choose.
- If there are 3 cards in the flop, you must discard one.
- You can pick a low card to discard for free, or pay a fee to discard a higher-value card.
- Discarding is (nominal value − 1) to discard, so:

Rank	Discard Fee
3 – T	*free*
2, J	1
Q	2
K	3
A	4

- If your choice is only to pay for a discard, and you don't wish too, the bank will discard the lowest ranked card, closest to the discard pile, for free.

Selling a card to the Bank

- The bank pays 1 for any card sold back to it
- Cards held in your hand can be sold & discarded 'face down' so that other players know that you have sold a card, but not what card it is.

- You cannot sell a card you have just bought.

Putting a card back on the market
- If there is room in the flop, you can put any card with a value of more than one, back onto it, placing it back on the market.
- The bank will return your investment minus an admin fee of 1 token. So, placing an Ace on the market will pay you 4 tokens.
    - Note that if you later decide to discard it, it will cost you 4 tokens to do so. At which point, you might as well have sold it straight to the bank for 1.
- You can make a space in the flop by buying a card, and then put a different card back on the market in its place.

The Stack, Flop & Discard Pile
- Cards, conceptually, move sideways from the stack, through the flop, onto the discard pile. This represents the market, knowledge of how it will behave in the future, and what stock is hot at the moment.
- Slide cards in the flop towards the discard pile so that new cards are always added to the side near the stack.
- Watching how the stack shrinks and the discard pile grows helps to give an understanding of how far through the game you are.

The End-Game
- There are two ways to trigger the endgame.
- 1. A player gets a 'Royal Flush', i.e., A-K-Q-J-T
  1. The stack runs out.

If a player gets a royal flush, each other player has one last round of dividends:

1. Remove any tokens protecting cards
2. Pay out the dividends for their stock

If the stack ran out:

1. Shuffle the discard pile replace the stack with it
2. Each player has one last turn

The Winner

To work out who has won, allocate points as follows:

1. Each card a player has on the table scores 1 pt.
2. Each card a player has in their hand scores -2 pts.
3. Each token scores 1 pt.
4. A royal flush scores 10 pts.

The player with the most points at the end is the winner.

Variations

Jokers

It would be fun to try including jokers in the game, much as board games have 'chance' cards. Red & black Jokers could have different effects. Suggestions:

– A joker puts a block on anyone buying a run or a set for one turn. It is placed onto the cards just like protection money. It is discarded on your next turn.
– A joker acts like a wild card in a run to join two almost touching runs together, e.g. in K-Q-J…joker…9–8 the joker acts like a ten. However, jokers shouldn't be counted in the dividend, so that run would score 8 not 9. They can only be played in the middle of a run, never at the start or end (unless another card, that encloses them, is played with them).
– A joker allows you to take any joining card from an opponent. You swap the joker into their run and take their card out. Again, you can only take a card from the middle, never the top or the bottom. Essentially, this will be a licence to steal a king.
– My Canasta set has 6 jokers, of three types, so potentially you could have all three rules.
– Jokers could be dealt out to each player at the beginning or appear in the flop. It would need play-testing, but they could be free to take, or expensive to buy — both would be fun as long as they didn't unbalance the game.
– Jokers could be free to keep (lay face-down on the table) or you have to pay tax to keep them in your hand. I prefer you paying tax to keep them as that would encourage you to use them impulsively and could make them uneconomical to keep for too

long.

Variable-length Suits

It would be fun to try varying the length of the suits. For instance,

- You could play with two sets of Clubs and diamonds
- You could limit Spades and hearts to only 10-A
- You could pay more for short suit cards at the end of the game, e.g. spades & hearts could be 2 points each
- If you finish the game with a royal flush from a short suit you could get a much bigger bonus, e.g. 50 points.

Mixed Runs

It might be fun to try playing with mixed runs:

- Pay dividends from bottom up, so K♠-Q♥-J♥ pay 2+1+1=4 rather than 4+1+1=6