

Dev Diary #06

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Drakensang – Official Dev Diary #6
13. 04. 2007: The Tatzelwurm

When we talked about the contents of the dev diary for the first time, our thoughts soon turned to what is probably the most controversial topic in the community: the tatzelwurm.

The tatzelwurm was one of the first creatures that appeared in public on several images and in a video, and we received very mixed feedback on it. One facet of the discussion was the allegation that we didn't stick close enough to the original pen and paper game – and that's true. In the long history of TDE, many things got revised, as did the tatzelwurm, which looks different throughout various official publications.

Before I tell you more about this history and our approach to the tatzelwurm, I should add a couple of words about the creature for the people that are not familiar with the pen and paper game. The Aventurian tatzelwurm is a distant relative of the dragons. The most obvious attribute of that relationship are the three pairs of legs (which are typical for Aventurian dragons) and their inclination to establish hoards. But when comparing them to higher dragons, their blood temperature is significantly lower and they possess only very little intelligence, bad memory and no magical abilities. Tatzelwurms are degenerate creatures, which also manifests in their gross smell.

The description of the tatzelwurm has barely been modified between the first and the fourth edition, but the pictures provided have changed massively.

When the work on the tatzelwurm began, we scanned the official publications for descriptions and pictures. We found images in the rule books and in several adventures. As you can see, the illustrations vary a lot, and probably there are a few more out there.

Our investigations supplied us with many ideas and inspirations, but we also met a problem: There is no standardized illustration of the tatzelwurm. These circumstances led us to the decision to create Aventuria and its inhabitants as we imagine it ourselves in case of doubt.

We found it important to make the creatures move realistically; beneath the surface they all have a skeleton and muscles. For this reason, we looked around in the real world for examples.

By doing so, we moved away from existing illustrations and gave Aventuria another version of the tatzelwurm. Since the descriptions were supplied to us with very sparse information on the looks of a tatzelwurm, we permitted ourselves quite a few big liberties in designing the creature.

At this point, technology was more restrictive and that had a considerable impact on our design. For example, we chose not to give it any hair or fur, because it's still very difficult to render them in a believable way.

So, the requirements for the first drafts were: no hair, at least six legs, credible construction, threatening appearance and a recognizable relationship to dragons. The last point led us to include the controversial wings, but we hadn't been the first ones to draw a tatzelwurm like this.

In the course of development we came closer and closer to our tatzelwurm, and we only had to implement details (the shape of the head and the tail, the proportions etc).

At this point it's nothing more than a question of taste what decision one makes – and our decisions resulted in the final model some of you might already know.

I hope that I was able to explain to you, why we made the tatzelwurm look this way. You can be assured that we follow the discussions about our work in the forum and on conventions, and that we discuss the feedback of the community in-house. Obviously, we can't meet all expectations of every player, especially as the tastes differ within the community as well.

Finally I'd like to quote Bernd, our Creative Director. Anyone who has seen the Games Convention 2006 trailer, might remember that the tatzelwurm in the video spits fire – quite a mistake. But as Bernd said at last year's RatCon in Dortmund: "In the final version of the game, the tatzelwurm certainly won't be able to spit fire, but he will definitely reek!"

- Written by Radon Labs -

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