

Dominant Species: The Card Game – rules summary

The game has 12 Biome cards, 6 Element cards, 112 Action cards, a play aid, and several wooden bits. The game is played over 12 rounds, each one a competition at a different Biome (terrain) card.

Setup:

Place the “Sea” biome card face down to the side of the play area. Shuffle the eleven remaining biome cards together and place them face down atop the Sea to form a draw pile. Draw the top card and place it in the center of the table – this biome will host the competition for the first round of play. Flip the top card of the biome deck face up (so players know what the next one will be).

Place the track display to the side of the play area. Have each player choose a color, then place the cube of that color in the “0” space of the Victory Point Track and the disc of that color in the “2/0” space of the Survival Track. (Survival is how many cards a player draws/discards at the end of each round.)

Place the six Element cards off to the side for now. They will enter the game during the course of play.

Shuffle the 112 Action cards together and place them off to the side to form a draw pile. Deal 7 cards to each player.

Determine a starting player at random and begin.

Game Play:

In each round, players take turns clockwise around the table, beginning with the starting player (*and the starting player is different for every round, passing one player to the left each round*). On a player's turn, he must choose to either:

(a) play one Action card; *or*

(b) pass.

If a player passes, he must pass on each of his turns for the remainder of the round (but any cards he previously played to the table remain in play). If a player passes when he has exactly zero cards in hand, the round immediately ends; otherwise the round ends when all players pass consecutively. At that point, the biome and Element cards are scored, the biome is reset, new Action cards are drawn, and the next round begins.

Action Deck:

The Action deck consists of two types of cards: events and animals. Events are self-explanatory, with some being one-time effects and others persistent throughout the round. Animals are played to the table and contribute Food Chain points for that player towards winning the 1st, 2nd and/or 3rd place Food Chain VPs on the current biome [leaf symbol = Food Chain]. Animal cards usually have one or more elements underneath their FC value, which contribute towards taking control of the matching Element card. Some animal cards also have a mammal, reptile, bird, amphibian, arachnid or insect icon

underneath their elements [behind a red circular “no” icon] which indicates the ability of that card to suppress an animal of the matching type when it enters play.

Playing Animals – Animals are played to the table with their black "healthy" number facing towards the biome at the center of the table. *[subsequently-played animals should be played on top of previously-played animals, but offset slightly down and to the right so that all elements, food chain numbers and animal types can be seen.]* If a healthy animal becomes "suppressed" it is flipped 180 degrees to its red "endangered" number (and with fewer element icons, too). An endangered animal that becomes suppressed is eliminated: remove it from play, placing it in the discard pile. An animal card already played to the table can be suppressed via events, or when a player plays a new animal that has the round "no" symbol underneath its element icons (and the symbol shows which animal type has to be suppressed). Suppression only ever affects a single animal card unless an event specifically states otherwise. Suppression is mandatory (for example, if you play a card that suppresses an insect, and you have the only insect in play, you must suppress it).

Playing Events – “One-time events” are played, their effects resolved, then the card is discarded. “Ongoing events” are played to the table and have some sort of persistent or delayed effect. Ongoing events are discarded at the end of a round along with all played animal cards.

Controlling Elements – When an event card or animal card is played, and after any suppression or other effect as called for by that card is completed, check to see if any one player has the sole-highest number of grass/grub/meat/seed/sun/water icons showing on his played animals. If so, that player takes control of the grass/grub/meat/seed/sun/water Element card, respectively (place it on the table in front of that player). If not – including when two or more players are tied for most of any element type – that Element card remains where it is (either off to the side, uncontrolled by any player, or in front of its current controller). *In other words, a single player needs to have the MOST of an element type to take control of that Element card from another player – at the start of the game, it takes only a single icon to take control of an Element card from its set-aside location.*

Scoring:

When a round ends due to passing, it's scoring time (as well as performing a little clean-up in preparation for the next round).

(1) All players add up their current Food Chain totals on their animals in play:

- The player or players with the highest total gain the (top) 1st-place VP value of the current biome;
- the player or players with the second highest total gain the (middle) 2nd-place VP value of the current biome (if any);
- and the player or players with the third highest total gain the (bottom) 3rd-place VP value of the current biome (if any).

Some biomes award no points for 2nd and/or 3rd place. Ties give all tied animals the full amount for that position. *(For example, at the Desert biome, 1st place receives 3 VPs and 2nd place 1 VP. There is no 3rd place at this biome. Multiple players could receive the 3 VPs for first place if they are all tied for highest FC total.)*

(2) If the current biome is "Tundra," the player or players who earned the 1st-place Food Chain victory point also each advance one space on the Survival Track. *From 2/0 to 3/1 to 4/2, etc.*

(3) The player or players with the most Element cards each score 1 VP. Then, for each element icon shown on the current biome, players owning that particular Element card score 1 additional VP. *(For example, at the Desert Biome, the player with the Sun Element card receives 3 additional VPs, the player with Grass 1 more, and the player with Meat 1 more.)*

(4) If this is the 12th (Sea) biome, or if any player has more than 65 victory points, the game ends. Otherwise perform steps (5) and (6) and continue playing.

(5) Discard all animal cards and ongoing events in play. Put the current biome back in the box. Put the top (face-up) biome card in the center of the table: it will be the biome competed for in the next round. Flip face-up the top card of the biome deck. *(note: players retain any acquired Element cards unless and until they are taken from them through the normal course of play)*

(6) Finally, each player draws then discards Action cards according to their position on the Survival Track: Draw a number of cards equal to the number before the slash, put them in their hand, then discard a number of cards from their hand equal to the number after the slash. *(note: any card in hand can be discarded, not just those just drawn)*

Game End & Final Scoring:

The game ends in one of two ways:

- After scoring the Sea biome; or
- After scoring any biome in which a player reaches 66+ victory points.

Players earn final victory points as follows:

- The player or players in the highest Survival space score 5 VPs each.
- The player or players in the lowest Survival space lose 5 VPs each.

The player with the highest total VP count wins the game. Ties for highest are broken by: highest position on the Survival Track; then most cards remaining in hand; then most Element cards. If still tied, the victory is shared.

Glossary:

Biome – one of the twelve cards at which the twelve competition rounds are fought.

Element – element icons on animal cards aid in acquiring Element cards, which score their owners victory points at the end of every round.

Animal – an Action card with a Food Chain number and usually one or more element icons and possibly a suppression symbol.

Class – Animal cards are always one of six different classes: insect, arachnid, amphibian, bird, reptile or mammal (as indicated at the top middle of the card as well as by the cards' distinct backgrounds).

Healthy – an animal with its black # facing towards the center of the table.

Endangered – an animal with its red # facing towards the center of the table.

Suppress – flipping a healthy animal to its endangered side, or eliminating an endangered animal.

Event – An Action card that isn't animal.

Food Chain – the large black or red number in the upper left corner of every animal card which allow a player to compete for the victory point(s) next to the leaf symbol on the right half of every biome card.