



Free Game # 48 from Invisible City Productions, Inc.

**A post-zombie apocalypse game of entrepreneurship
for two to four players.**

**Created by Natosha Ellis, Benjamin Gibbs,
and Jonathan Leistiko**

Story:

We trust you will employ the utmost discretion.

Following the disease epidemic of '32 (the so-called "Zombie Plague") and the unfortunate, wide-ranging impact to the ecosystem of North America, you can understand why our citizens, quarantined and cut off from the international community, would turn to "unconventional" food sources.

From great need can often arise great opportunities.

These opportunities are available to those who possess the vision and the courage to strive for greatness. For, as you are certainly aware, there is a small but demanding market in the most chic international culinary circles for the finest and rarest foods. What would a gourmand desire more than the most perfectly aged steak?

The most perfectly aged steak that has no chance of spoilage.

We offer competitive contracts to the ranching firms that prove themselves the most efficient at harvesting and coralling livestock from our Federally owned and regulated Zombie Ranches.

We look forward to receiving your proposal.

Regards,

Jonathan A. Leistiko

Director of Acquisitions, Ranch 7093

The zombie infestation of North America swept the United States like wildfire. Unchecked, zombie hordes destroyed the agricultural base; destroying fields, devouring cattle. Governments toppled as food resources became scarcer and scarcer. Quarantined by the rest of the world, it took 10 years for the survivors and governments-in-exile to wheedle support and aid from an international community filled with fear and skepticism.

Early in the process of containment, eradication, and reconstruction, a horrible secret was discovered: To supplement dwindling ration supplies, many survivors harvested and ate the corpses of the zombies they killed. Shockingly, zombie flesh was the most tender, tastiest, best-aged meat in the world. Preserved by the zombie disease while tenderized by necrotic bacteria, zombie steak made several black-market smugglers very wealthy. Serving zombie steak became an unusual, but chic, status symbol among the elite and wealthy outside North America.

Once the governments of North America were reestablished, strict global restrictions were created to prevent the disease from spreading. "Live" zombies were banned from export from North America. Sterilized zombie meat can only be shipped outside the continent after FDA approval. Recognizing the demand for zombie steak, and desperate for revenue to rebuild the economy, the US government did not eradicate the last of the zombies, but herded them into federally controlled and regulated "zombie ranches". Today, zombie flesh is a small, but significant part of the GNP. Each fiscal year, contractors bid for the right to harvest and process zombies from their local zombie ranch. You are one of the contractors lucky enough to land a rancher's contract. Your goal is to capture the finest, tastiest, and best-aged zombies and render them into juicy steaks and fillets.

Welcome to the world of Zombie Rancher.

Object:

To lure the tastiest zombies to your cattle pen.

You Need:

For a 2-Player Game You Need:

- A Zombie Rancher board
- 30 zombie tokens (Small dice, beads, or loose change work well.)
- 22 blue and 22 red trap tokens (Poker chips.)
- 5 bait tokens (White poker chips or quarters.)
- One 6-sided die.

For Up To 4 Players You Also Need:

- 2 homogenous sets of 22 trap tokens (Pennies and nickels work well.)

Setting Up:

Place 30 zombie tokens in the center of the board.

Pick a vacant corner square. This is your home square. If playing with 2 players, the opposite corner is also your home square. Take all of the trap tokens of one type. Put a trap token your Home square(s).

Take turns putting trap tokens in vacant non-Home spaces until each player has placed three traps.

The hungriest player goes first.

Play:

You get three actions each turn. You do not have to use all (or any) of your actions. When you have taken all the actions you want to take, your turn ends. Play passes to your left. The actions you can take are: Lure, Set Traps, and Trip Traps.

- Lure

Luring takes two actions. Place up to 5 bait tokens under zombies on the board. Roll a die. If you roll a 3 or 4, you may move each baited zombie up to three spaces. If you roll a 2 or a 5, you may move each baited zombie one space. If you roll a 1, the player on your left may move each baited zombie up to 2 spaces. If you roll a 6, the player on your right may move each baited zombie up to 2 spaces.

Zombies may only move to horizontally or vertically adjacent squares. Moves may not be diagonal. A zombie may not enter a square occupied by three zombies, a barricade (shaded space), or the Holding Pen.

If a zombie enters a space occupied by one of your traps (even when another player is moving it), you may remove that trap from the board to attempt to capture that zombie. Roll a die. If it shows a 5 or a 6, place the zombie in your Cattle Pen. If it is less than 5, the zombie must stop moving. Play resumes its normal sequence when you're finished.

If a zombie enters your Home square, remove it from the board and put it in your Cattle Pen. If a zombie enters an unclaimed Home square, remove it from the game.

- **Set Traps**
Place a trap token in a non-Home, non-Holding Pen space without a trap token in it.
- **Trip Traps**
Select one of your traps on the board. Roll a die. If it is greater than 3, remove the trap and all zombies from that space. Put the removed zombies in your Cattle Pen. If it is less than 4, remove your trap from the board.

When your turn is complete, play passes clockwise.

Winning:

If there are 5 or fewer zombies left on the board at the end of your turn, the game ends. Flip coins equal to the number of zombies in your Cattle Pen. Count heads as 3 points and tails as 2 points and add them up. Add 1 point for every unused trap you have on the board. The player with the highest total wins.

Variants:

Corporate War:

During Setup, randomly assign one of the following specialties to each player:

1. **Pulverizers:** Zombies you fail to trap are removed from the game instead of stopped.
2. **Carrion:** You may remove one trap at the start of your turn to move all zombies one space toward the trap's former square.
3. **Charnel House:** Each turn, you may re-roll the first 1 or 6 you roll for Luring.
4. **Enhanced Traps:** Add one to every roll you make when triggering a trap.
5. **Brain Aroma:** When you get to move zombies during another player's turn, you may move them up to 4 spaces instead of just 2.
6. **Profit Sharing:** Remove a zombie from your Cattle Pen at the start of your turn to take 4 actions that turn.

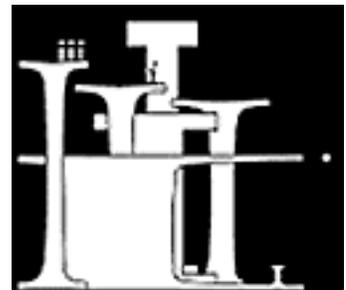
Origin and Credits:

Thanks to Sharon for the "in character" game intro and editing. Thanks to Brandon, Ian, Leif, Mike, Tangent, and Valerie for playtesting and additional rule ideas. Thanks to The Zombie Survival Handbook and the ad copy on the menus at Texas Land and Cattle for giving me the idea of the game. Thanks to the free games section at About.com for hosting the contest that inspired me in the first place.

So the About.com contest challenge was to make a game that uses shared pieces; pieces that no one player can lay exclusive claim to. Secondary restrictions: a simple board, less than 1,000 words, for two players (more optional). I started with the idea of particles moving in an area that the players are trying to gather, like debris in space. The problem with this is that it'd require ship pieces for each player, and having pieces that only specific players can move seemed counter to the spirit of the contest. So I had to let the players have equal access to moving the targets, not the gathering points. This quickly led to a board with a central dispersion point for the goal pieces and home squares for the players in the corners. The mechanic for moving pieces came shortly afterward. Now I just needed a story to tack onto it. I wish I could explain what caused me to think of the story. I think it went something like this... I was reading the very funny Zombie Survival Handbook just before Sharon and I went to Texas Land and Cattle for dinner. The ad copy of Texas Land and Cattle's menu brags about how their steaks are aged for two weeks to make them tenderer. This is because the bacteria in the meat pre-digests it a bit before you eat it; it's

a step on the road to putrefication. Putting two and two together, a *zombie* steak could, ostensibly, be both tender (from being in a dead body) and hearty (from all that exercise - shambling around and whatnot).

Ergo, Zombie Rancher.



Free games monthly from Invisible City Productions, Inc.
<http://www.invisible-city.com/games/>