

## Management of the White Rhinoceros at Lion Country Safari, Loxahatchee Florida

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### Abstract

Lion Country Safari, in Loxahatchee, Florida, has been displaying white rhino since opening in 1967. There in a zoo typical two-acre island exhibit, 1.2 animals were displayed in a section where lions were released for display daily. That all changed when in 1972, the section was changed to an elephant/zebra/rhino section. Young white rhino were purchased by Lion Country Safari from Natal, South Africa. Many were soon moved to other Lion Country's in Los Angeles, Grand Prairie, TX, and Jonesboro, GA. The group that stayed and were released in Section 6 daily started something good. In 1979, the first birth was a bull. The latest birth, August 24<sup>th</sup> of this year was Lion Country Safari's 27<sup>th</sup> captive birth. The success of this program can possibly be attributed to several factors: 1) space provided during daylight hours for animals to graze and be alone or socialize, 2) multiple male groups led to increased attention by the males to a hierarchy and territoriality amidst an atmosphere of acceptable levels of aggression.

Bulls are a problem to manage however, and due to safety precautions, now only one of the aggressively dominant bulls is on display at a time. The three bulls are shifted weekly.

SSP involvement is important to Lion Country Safari so we are working to check the DNA of our herd in order to establish paternity. Since we have multiple male groups, we cannot guarantee paternity.

The new system that we have developed has two confinement hallways that will allow us to condition the rhino to work with us without the use of drugs. The keepers are working hard to condition the animals individually: first to the process of walking into and through this restraint chute, then to the keepers presence, the doors being shut, etc.

Current population is 7.7. Eleven (11) captive born, three (3) wild born.

The latest "Bonnie" is a female born 09/24/98. The bull "Buck" is the known sire because he was the only dominant bull out, and was seen copulating with "Lissa", the mother. Birth occurred 480 days later. Mother and baby are on display in our nursery pen where the public are able to enjoy a good view during their bonding time.