

Cincinnati Zoo Update

Update from Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden:

As you are aware, for a number of years we have been working to develop an artificial insemination procedure in Indian rhinoceros (The Crash; volume 2, issue 1 – August, 2007; pages 5-8). Dr. Monica Stoops, reproductive physiologist with Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden's Center for Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW), developed the technology for cryopreserving Indian rhino semen and has also formulated a thawing process to maintain maximum sperm motility for the insemination process. As keepers, we have numerous responsibilities in addition to successfully training, through operant conditioning, these Indian rhinoceros females to allow the artificial insemination procedure without the use of anesthetics. The success of this program is a unique collaboration of scientist, dedicated rhino professionals, and veterinarian. The result of this cooperative effort we achieved the first successful Indian rhinoceros pregnancy through artificial insemination, using frozen-thawed sperm.

However, on 5 January 2008 a devastating loss occurred. The 16-year old dam, "Nikki", began showing signs of restlessness Saturday morning and proceeded into labor early that evening. Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden staff was prepared and implemented our parturition protocol developed for this birth and at approximately 10:50 pm the 492-day wait was over and a female calf was delivered. Unfortunately, the calf showed no signs of life and resuscitation measures were unsuccessful. It was determined that the calf was stillborn.

We wish to express our sincere thanks for the outpouring of support and sympathy we have received after our tremendous loss. This tragic end will not over-shadow the monumental scientific breakthroughs and achievements the team has made and we will continue our efforts to conserve this endangered species.

Indian Rhino Artificial Insemination Team:



Pictured left to right:

Randy Pairan, Wendy Shaffstall, Dr. Monica Stoops, Renee Carpenter,
Steve Yelverton. (Team member not pictured: Jason Faessler)