

Black rhinos in Britain - November 1989 \*

von David M. Jones

Eingeg. 20.3.1990

Current situation

There are currently 14 Black Rhinos in the United Kingdom (UK), 6 males and 8 females. Two female calves and 1 male have been born in the last year: 1 at London, which has been hand-reared and is now a year old, and 2 born at Port Lympne. The male calf died of injuries inflicted by its mother.

Seven of the animals are owned by Port Lympne/Howletts, 6 by Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and 1 by Paignton.

All the animals are being managed in the best interests of the species, the principal criterion being to ensure that every female of reproductive age is in a situation where she should reproduce. Despite a superficially optimistic picture, only one of the males is breeding at the present time. This male, which at 27 is one of the two oldest animals we have in the UK, is currently at Port Lympne and was originally at London. He is the father of all recent calves. This same male has also mated the old Whipsnade female which is also currently housed at Port Lympne.

The Paignton male (18 years old), recently at London, has regularly mated the 25-year old London female but so far there is no evidence of a pregnancy and it may be that this animal is now beyond her reproductive life.

Matings have also been noted regularly between the 7-year old pair held at Chester, but again pregnancy has not been confirmed.

Forward Plan

The male at London (Paignton owned) has now been changed over with the 12-year old male from Port Lympne to give the old breeding female at London a further opportunity to see if a pregnancy is still possible. If the female at Chester continues to cycle during the spring of 1990, the male there will be exchanged for one of the other adult males as yet to be decided, but probably the Paignton male.

It is planned to set up a new Black Rhino breeding unit at Whipsnade by upgrading the large original White Rhino house, which would be capable of holding at least 6 animals. The hand-reared female, ROSIE, from London would be transferred to that unit and it has been provisionally agreed that the 2-year old female born at Delhi will also come to the UK. We will probably then arrange for a young male of about the same age, probably from Dvur Kralove, to join these two females and make up a young trio. Efforts are also being made to bring the 16-year old female at Colombo Zoo, which has been on its own for some time, into the UK breeding situation and we have also asked Rome to consider doing the same with their 18-year old female, which has bred previously but is again on her own.

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\* Cordially dedicated to Colleague Heinz-Georg Klös on the occasion of his 65th anniversary.

### Carrying capacity

Both Port Lympne and the two ZSL sites have had considerable success in breeding and rearing this species in the past and it is important that the experience and facilities of these three sites are utilised to the maximum. That is part of the reason for expanding the capacity to hold this species at Whipsnade. It is important, before more calves are sent away from these sites, that a stable, actively-breeding population with a sensible age structure is established there. Port Lympne are at full capacity at present but are prepared to build further facilities, Whipsnade will be able to take 6 animals, London is at full capacity with 3 adults; Chester could take an additional pair and Paignton would be prepared to use their new facilities for Black Rhinos, instead of Whites as animals became available. They could hold 2 - 3 adults. The total UK holding capacity is therefore about double the present figure. Given the current limited availability of animals from outside the country and a moderate breeding potential of about 2 calves per year and allowing for the death of the 3 oldest animals now in their mid 20s, it is likely that this capacity figure would probably be reached in about 7 - 9 years.

### Zusammenfassung

Der Autor gibt einen Situationsbericht zur Spitzmaulnashornpopulation in Großbritannien in 1990 und einen Ausblick in das zukünftige Bestandsmanagement für Spitzmaulnashörner im Bereich der JMSG. Abschließend wird die mögliche "carrying capacity" für Spitzmaulnashörner der Haltungen in Großbritannien diskutiert.

### Anschrift des Verfassers:

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