

## Printed rhino horn

A 3D-PRINTED rhino horn is making its debut next month, and could be on sale by August. The idea is to flood the market with synthetic horns in an effort to stem the number of rhinos killed.

KIM TAYLOR/NATUREPL.COM



Salamanders succumb, newts next

### “Why not satisfy people’s needs for rhino horn instead of telling them their needs are wrong”

Rhino horn can sell for \$60,000 per kilogram, pushing some species to the brink of extinction.

The horn is printed by Seattle-based start-up Pembient using a keratin-based powder with the same spectrographic signature as rhino horn. It has a similar smell and feel to real horns. “This is something people want, and we have the technology to make it available to them,” says Pembient CEO Matthew Markus. “Why not try to satisfy their needs instead of telling them their needs are wrong?”

But conservationists fear the plan may undermine efforts to cut demand for rhino horn in China and Vietnam, the main black markets. “This could really backfire,” says Crawford Allan, senior director of TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network. “Rhinos cannot afford the risk – there are too few of them. Any miscalculation could cause even greater problems.”

## Newts on alert

A SKIN-EATING fungus that has wiped out 95 per cent of the salamander population in Belgium and the Netherlands has arrived in the UK.

The fungus, *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bs), which was discovered in 2013, has killed four captive salamanders imported to the UK. Researchers have warned that if it escapes into the wild, it could decimate the population

and hobbyists shouldn’t be dumped down sinks or in gardens without disinfection.”

The great crested newt is relatively abundant in the UK, Fisher says. Ironically, that makes the species more vulnerable because the disease could potentially spread more easily than it would if only isolated colonies existed.

### “It’s critical that no animals potentially carrying the fungus are released into the wild”

of great crested newts, a species native to the UK (*Veterinary Record*, doi.org/4bm).

Bs is a chytrid fungus related to *B. dendrobatidis*, which has been wiping out frogs and toads around the world. It has also been found in the UK, but does not seem to have harmed native frogs and toads. Given that Bs has already been shown to kill great crested newts, its arrival is potentially more serious.

“It’s critical that no animals potentially carrying [the fungus] are released into the wild, which is illegal anyway,” says Matthew Fisher from Imperial College London. “Likewise, water and organic matter from collectors

## Pluto’s polar cap

LAND ahoy! About 80 days before it makes its closest approach to Pluto, NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft can finally see surface features on this tiny world – including what may be an ice cap at its pole.

New Horizons launched in 2006, just months before Pluto was designated a dwarf planet. Previously, our best images of this distant world came from the Hubble Space Telescope, which saw it as a smeary orange blob.

Now, New Horizons’ Long Range Reconnaissance Imager (LORRI) has captured pictures just slightly better than Hubble’s – although the rocky world still looks pixelated. Most intriguing is one bright pixel that showed up in the same place in every image. “It’s suspiciously suggestive of a polar cap,” says mission leader Alan Stern of the Southwest Research Institute in Colorado.

## 60 SECONDS

### Dreamliner says no

Switching it off and on again is once again the cure for a tech mishap. The US Federal Aviation Administration has revealed that Boeing’s 787 Dreamliner must be rebooted at least once every 248 days, or else a software bug could cause the plane to lose power. It’s the latest in a string of problems for 787s, which were previously grounded due to overheating batteries.

### Honey trumps money

Did your latest sugar hit leave you craving more? It might depend on the type you consumed. Fructose, the sugar found in honey and fruit, appears to make our brains more responsive to images of food than glucose, and people who drink fructose-rich drinks are more likely to choose high-calorie foods over money prizes (*PNAS*, doi.org/4bp).

### Pebble-dashed rover

Ever had a pebble stuck in your shoe? Curiosity knows the feeling. The Mars rover has snapped a picture of a rock wedged between the ridges of its tyre. NASA isn’t too worried – the rock shouldn’t affect Curiosity’s performance.

### Sonar-jamming junk

At least 57 species of hawkmoth have developed the ability to jam the sonar signals of their bat predators by rubbing their genitals against their abdomen. These ultrasonic genitals evolved independently at least twice among hawkmoths, which have been in an evolutionary race against bats for some 60 million years (*PNAS*, doi.org/4bq).

### Sleepwalking inherited

Here’s an advance warning. If both you and your partner sleepwalked as children, your child is seven times as likely to go for nocturnal strolls as they would if neither of you did. Sleep terrors in early childhood are also a warning sign, found a study of nearly 2000 Canadian children (*JAMA Pediatrics*, doi.org/4bn).



BLUE ORIGIN

Secret mission