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## DENTAL CONDITIONS OF CAPTIVE BLACK RHINOCEROUS (*Diceros bicornis*)

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### Abstract

Dental disease is an important cause of morbidity in a variety of captive non-domestic species.<sup>2,3</sup> However, little is known about dental conditions of captive non-domestic browsing herbivores. As several unique disease syndromes have been associated with black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) in captivity,<sup>1</sup> careful husbandry and management of these animals is considered particularly important. Evidence of dental disease was consistently present in skull specimens from captive adult black rhinos (Citino, pers. comm.).

This report summarizes the dental conditions of eight black rhinos aged between 8 and over 30 yr. Only three of these individuals were exhibiting clinical signs of dental disease. All animals had sharp points on the buccal surface of the maxillary cheek teeth and lingual surface of the mandibular cheek teeth. Rhinos older than 8 yr (n=7) had some degree of dental calculus. Rhinos older than 11 yr (n=4) had multiple loose teeth and associated purulent gingivitis. Sharp points were filed smooth in all rhinos and calculus removed where indicated. Premolar extractions were performed in two rhinos with dental abscesses.

These results indicate that complete oral examinations should be performed on black rhinos regularly, regardless of the absence of clinical signs. Furthermore, black rhinos may benefit from preventive dental care. Dietary considerations, management, and genetics should be considered as potential reasons for the frequent occurrence of dental disease in captive black rhinos.

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