

# The Last Male Northern White Rhino Has Died

Sudan was our last male northern white rhino. He was 45. Sudan was suffering from multiple infections in his advanced age. He was euthanized Monday by a veterinary team in Kenya, a team that had fought for years to save him.

*We at Ol Pejeta are all saddened by Sudan's death. He was an amazing rhino, a great ambassador for his species, and will be remembered for the work he did to raise awareness globally of the plight facing not only rhinos, but also the many thousands of other species facing extinction as a result of unsustainable human activity.*

*One day, his demise will hopefully be seen as a seminal moment for conservationists worldwide." – Richard Vigne, Ol Pejeta Conservancy CEO*

Rhinos around the world are on the brink of extinction, and this is mostly due to poaching. Rhino horn has been highly prized in Chinese traditional medicine and as a decorative component of daggers carried by many Yemeni men. Around 30,000 rhinos from five species remain worldwide. Two species in Indonesia, the Sumatran and Javan rhinos, have around or less than 100 individuals.

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Sudan spent the last years of his life under 24-hour protection from armed guards. His horn had been chopped off to deter poachers, though it had begun to grow back. His guards regularly foiled poaching attacks. But the effort to save the northern white rhino seems to have come too late for a real turnaround.

# But the Subspecies May Still Survive

Researchers saved the sperm from Sudan, and from four other male northern white rhinos before they died. They think they might be able to produce a calf via in vitro fertilization. The researchers would fertilize one of the female eggs with the frozen sperm. The team could then use a female of a closely related species, the southern white rhino, as a surrogate.

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If that doesn't work, scientists could potentially transform northern white rhino skin cells into stem cells. They would then coax those stem cells into eggs. They would then fertilize the eggs.

Since the last two remaining northern white rhinos are closely related there would need to be a way to diversify the subspecies. The stem cell option could help with that, as scientists could use any samples from any of the deceased rhino.

Many conservationists think we'd be better off spending that money elsewhere. The cost is at \$800,000 to \$10 million per attempt. We're in the middle of a mass extinction, as and this scares the hell out of anyone who understands how systems work. Do you think the northern white rhino is deserving of such incredible expense to bring it back from extinction or is our money spent better elsewhere?

## **Sources:**

- *The Last Male Northern White Rhino Is Dead, but the Subspecies Could Still Survive* – Futurism
- *World's last male northern white rhino has died* – The Mercury News

