

## Scientists believe DNA has half life of more than 500 years

Few researchers have given credence to claims that samples of dinosaur DNA have survived to the present day, but no one knew just how long it would take for genetic material to fall apart. Now, a study of fossils found in New Zealand is laying the matter to rest — and putting paid to hopes of cloning a *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

After cell death, enzymes start to break down the bonds between the nucleotides that form the backbone of DNA, and micro-organisms speed the decay. In the long run, however, reactions with water are thought to be responsible for most bond degradation. Groundwater is almost ubiquitous, so DNA in buried bone samples should, in theory, degrade at a set rate.

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