

## Can IVF save white rhino from extinction?

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The northern white rhinoceros is a species waiting for extinction. Its three remaining individuals, kept in a well-guarded Kenyan conservation park, cannot breed naturally. A 15-year-old female named Fatu could be the last of a creature that once roamed central African savannahs by the thousands.

In a last-gasp effort to avert that scenario, researchers unveiled the details of an audacious plan to save the northern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*), by transforming cells from living rhinos and from frozen storage into sperm and egg cells, and then using *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) to create embryos and revitalize the population. Teams led by San Diego Zoo Global in California and the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Berlin have already started work on the idea. They say that it could guide the rescue of other animals that are on the brink of extinction, and even the resurrection of those already gone. But critics call the plan, which is likely to require millions of dollars, fanciful and worry that it could distract from broader conservation efforts.

“The northern white rhinoceros will go extinct if we don’t do this,” says Oliver Ryder, a conservation geneticist at San Diego Zoo Global and a leading architect of the rescue plan. The strategy was drawn up last December in Vienna at a meeting that was attended by teams from both zoos, as well as specialists in stem-cell and reproductive biology.

**Read full, original post:** [Stem-cell plan aims to bring rhino back from brink of extinction](#)