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# The Birth of an Indian Rhinoceros Calf at Whipsnade

BY

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THE recent birth of a female rhinoceros at Whipsnade Zoological Park is of great interest and underlines the successful breeding records that are achieved at Whipsnade. It further shows that the experiment embarked upon some 25 years ago by the London Zoological Society in establishing a Zoological Park where the animals could be kept under conditions as nearly corresponding to their natural habitat as possible has proved that this is the ideal method.

There has been only one other birth of an Indian rhinoceros calf in captivity and that was at Basle Zoo in 1956.

Whipsnade received Mohan the male rhinoceros in 1947 and he soon settled down in his paddock and became quite amiable. In 1952 Mohini, a female of about 2 years, was purchased from Assam and came to occupy the stable next to Mohan and they both settled in well but they were not allowed together until Mohini was old enough.

The male, during this interval, reached sexual maturity and occasionally showed signs of "rutting." The female, however, did not reach sexual maturity until 1954 when, on June 8th, the first oestrus period was recorded, lasting for about 24 hours. That day it was decided to allow the 2 rhinos into the paddock together. In view of past experiences at Whipsnade before the war, and those of other Zoos, this was quite a risk, but fortunately all went well. In fact Mohan refused all blandishments of his wife and took refuge in the pool while she, disappointed with him, retired to bed in his stable! This, however, resulted in the two becoming attached to each other, and visitors could often see them lying together in the paddock.

The next oestrus occurred 56 days later on August 3rd, and the oestrus periods of the female continued to recur at an average of 43 days until January 27th, 1955, after which an anoestrus period of 107 days occurred. The next oestrus period was on June 9th, 1955, and 3 periods were observed that summer.

The reactions of the male during these oestrus periods were disappointing as he appeared to take little notice of the female whilst she was in oestrus, but he would show very definite signs of sexual activity 2 days later.

It was then suggested that the diet which consisted of clover hay, green foods in season, and oats with maize, was on too high a nitrogenous plane and that meadow hay should be substituted for clover. It was also known that some varieties of clover appear to contain oestrogenic substance which have a deleterious effect on the sexual activity of some animals.

There was, however, little change in the outward manifestations, although the male did appear to take a little more interest during the oestrus periods of the female, which in all cases lasted approximately 24 hours. After the oestrus period on October 7th, 1955, a second anoestrus period lasting 126 days occurred.

On February 10th, 1956, the female came into season and this was followed by 2 heats at intervals of 39 and 52 days to May 11th. On each occasion the male showed marked sexual activity 48 hours after each period.

Professor E. C. Amoroso of the Royal Veterinary College was consulted and he suggested that the administration of sex hormones to the male might help. Professor Amoroso was able to obtain supplies of Methyltestosterone that could be given *per os* and the dose having regard to the fact that Mohan weighed nearly 3 tons was computed at 150 mg. t.i.d. for 4 days. This was given in early June and repeated 14 days later. Mohini came into oestrus on June 29th, an interval of 49 days, and the two were heard "whistling" in the paddock at dusk but there appeared little outward change in their usual behaviour.

Professor Amoroso then obtained supplies of Dehydroandrosterone which was administered in early August at the rate of 150 mg. daily for 10 days. The female did not again come into season in 1956 nor in early 1957 when the usual anoestrus period would have been completed. Hopes of a successful mating began to arise and in late September, 1957, the appearance of Mohini began to indicate these hopes were justified. On October 29th a female calf was born after a pregnancy of 16 months.

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## ABSTRACTS

**Salt Tolerance of Turkeys.** ROBERTS, R. E. (1957). *Poult. Sci.* 36. 672-3.

In 3 experiments, turkeys of 8, 26, and 31 weeks of age were given food containing from 0.45 to 8 per cent. of sodium chloride for 3 or 4 weeks. No deaths occurred. Birds receiving 6 or 8 per cent. of salt showed some reduction of weight gain, and the water consumption increased markedly with the salt content of the diet. (See page 1115, "An Outbreak of Sodium Chloride Poisoning in Turkey Poults" by E. A. Gibson.—Editor.)

**The Value of Grit for Chickens and Turkeys.** SCOTT, M. L., and HEUSER, G. F. (1957). *Poult. Sci.* 36. 276-83.

The authors state that a supply of insoluble grit is necessary for the maximum growth, efficiency, and production of chickens, growing turkeys, and laying hens whose diet consists of mash and grain. In each case the birds preferred feldspar grit to granite grit.

Limestone grit and oyster shell were not suited to the dual purpose of supplying additional calcium and aiding the grinding action of the gizzard. A supply of limestone grit apparently helped to prevent the occurrence of enlarged hock disorder in growing turkeys, but the reason for this action was obscure.

E. A. G.