



WHY RHINO SCATTERS HIS DUNG

A long time ago when the world was new and the animals were settling into their homes, Rhino and Elephant had a disagreement which eventually turned into an all out battle! Both animals were strong and equipped with dangerous weapons with which they defended themselves bravely.

Rhino, being short sighted, fought wildly but still managed to inflict a couple of nasty stab wounds on poor Elephant.

Elephant, who is much wiser, used his great tusks to defend himself. Rhino soon had several great gashes in his hide and realised he had to surrender. Poor old Rhino!

He stumbed away, wondering who he could ask to help him mend the holes in his hide. At last he found Mrs Porcupine, who, being a kindly soul, lent him one of her sharpest quills to use as a needle. But, she made Rhino promise to return it as her quills were her only defense against those bigger animals who were tempted to turn her into a tasty dinner!

Rhino agreed and was soon putting big, clumsy stitches into his thick skin. At last it was done, and very tired from the fight and his sewing efforts, he flopped down into a sandy patch to sleep, carefully placing the quill beside him.

Regretfully, Rhino forgot about the quill when he woke, and only remembered his promise to return it when he bumped into Mrs Porcupine a few days later. Mystified, he could not remember what he had done with the useful quill.

He finally concluded that he must have accidentally swallowed it!

Now even Rhino realised that if he had swallowed it, it would be dealt with in the same way that his tummy dealt with everything else he swallowed!

So - to this day - Rhino always piles his dung up on one particular place, and then proceeds to kick it all about, still hoping that the precious quill will come to light!



FACTS ABOUT RHINOCEROS

Species: White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*, syn. *Diceros simus*)
Males often solitary. Several females may form a herd with a dominant bull. These herds of up to 10 are called a “laager”.

	Male	Female
Height	6 ft	5 1/3 ft
Weight	6600 lb	4400 lb
Weight at birth	88 lb	88 lb
Age at Weaning	2 years	2 years
Age at Maturity	7 years	5 years
Gestation Period		18 months
Number of young		1
Lifespan	45 years	45 years

Species: Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*)
ENDANGERED SPECIES

	Male	Female
Height	4 2/3 ft	4 ft
Weight	3300 lb	2200 lb
Weight at Birth	88 lb	77lb
Age at Weaning	2 years	2 years
Age at Maturity	7 years	5 years
Gestation Period		17 months
Number of Young		1
Lifespan	40 years	40 years

Identification: Contrary to what their names would lead you to believe, both black and white rhinoceros have a slate-grey, very thick skin, heavily folded round the neck and are hairless except for the tip of the tail and the edges of the ears, which are fringed with thick bristles. The only variation in colour comes from the mud or dust in which they' have been wallowing.

The big difference between them is that the black rhino has a pointed, flexible upper lip which enables it to eat leaves and twigs – thus it is a browser. The white rhino has a square upper lip and grazes on grass. This results in very characteristic postures – the black moving with head held up and the white with its head lowered. The white rhino also has a massive hump on its neck and is the larger of the two. In fact, next to the elephant, it is the largest living land mammal.

The horn of both species are similar and there is little apparent difference between the male and female. The horns, grown by both sexes, consist of hair fused into a hard bone-like substance. A by-product of their horns is used as a medicine for rheumatism and was once used as a popular aphrodisiac in parts of Asia but the main use until recently was for traditional, ornate dagger handles worn by the men in Yemen. Consequently, the animals have long been hunted and are now endangered.

Habitat: Open tree and bush savannah, thorn scrub and the lower slopes of mountains.

Habits: Living mainly alone or in small family groups, the rhino is very territorial. Its home range always includes at least one waterhole, preferably with a mud-wallow. On the boundaries each male leaves dung-heaps at regular intervals. He visits these frequently to deposit more droppings which are scattered about with the hind legs and front horn to form a flattened patch, sometimes more than six feet (two metres) across. The probable reason for this is to warn other males that they are trespassing, and to advertise his own presence to single females who thus are encouraged to enter his territory.

The two species of rhinoceros have different characters. The black rhino is short-tempered and will charge an intruder without much provocation. White rhinos are generally more docile, although they should still be treated with respect. Rhinoceros feed mainly in early morning and late afternoon and frequently drink at night.

Diet: The white rhino eats grasses and the black rhino eats twigs and leaves.

Breeding: There is no particular breeding season, and single offspring are produced at intervals of rarely less than three years.