

Taiwan prepares white rhino 'Emma' to find mate in Japan

March 3 2021, by Sean Chang



It is the first time Taiwan will send a southern white rhino overseas to breed

Emma, five years old, slim build with a gentle demeanour, is looking for love overseas. Hobbies include hanging with friends and studying Japanese. Seeks fellow rhino for companionship and mating.

It's been a busy and exciting time at Taiwan's Lefoo Safari Park where zookeepers have been preparing to send one of their southern [white rhinos](#) over to Japan.

Part of an attempt to widen the gene pool of Asia's captive-bred white rhinos, it is the first time Taiwan will send a rhino overseas to breed.

The safari park scoured their 23 strong herd to find a suitable candidate and settled on "Emma" who ticked all the right boxes.

"Emma was chosen because of her mild personality... and her smaller size also makes it easier to ship overseas," Sean Wu, the park's chief veterinarian and animal manager, told AFP.

"She seldom get into fights with other rhinos or snatch other's food."

Visa and paperwork depending, Emma will soon travel to Japan's Tobu Zoo in Saitama where a 10-year-old fellow rhino "Moran" has been lined up to be her first suitor.

To help her adapt to her future new home, zookeepers have started using Japanese instructions for commands such as "come" and "no".

"We have added Japanese commands in our daily animal training so that slowly when she (Emma) arrives in Japan she can more quickly adjust to the new language," Wu added.



The southern white rhino—found in the wild across southern Africa—currently number less than 19,000

The rhino has also been trained to get used to "outdoor ambient sounds" such as aeroplane engines and trucks to prepare her for any noise during the upcoming journey.

Her trip originally set for this month has been postponed to late April at the earliest due to Japan's border restrictions imposed over the Covid-19 pandemic, the park said.

A vet and a zookeeper will fly from Taiwan two weeks ahead of her departure to undergo quarantine. They will stay in Japan for at least a week to ensure Emma adjusts to the new environment.

The southern white rhino—found in the wild across southern Africa—currently number less than 19,000 according to the animal conservation group Save the Rhino.

They were nearly wiped out in last century but managed to recover thanks to conservation efforts.

Their northern cousins were not so lucky. Only two remain, both female, rendering the species functionally extinct.



Southern white rhinos were nearly wiped out in last century but managed to recover thanks to conservation efforts



Leofoo Safari Park imported eight rhinos from Africa in 1979 and now has the most successful breeding programme in Asia with 23 animals in its herd

Other rhino species such as the Javan rhino and Sumatran rhino have less than 100 herds left.

Zoo breeding programmes played a crucial role in repopulating [southern white rhino](#) herds.

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Rhino poaching is fuelled by a market for their horns in

Asia—especially China and Vietnam.

Horns are made of nothing more than keratin, the same material as fingernails and hair. But scammers erroneously market horns as an aphrodisiac or cancer cure.

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