

# White Rhinoceros

(*CERATOTHERIUM SIMUM*)

**Kingdom:** *Animalia*  
**Phylum:** *Chordata*  
**Class:** *Mammalia*  
**Order:** *Perissodactyla*  
**Family:** *Rhinocerotidae*



## The Name "Rhinoceros"

*"Rhinoceros" literally means "nose horn," and in this particular species we have a misnomer. It is not "white," but rather "weit," which is a Dutch word for "wide." This refers to this rhino's wide mouth (in contrast to the pointed lip of the black rhino) and allows this animal to graze from the ground.*

**LOCATION:** Southern Sudan and South Africa.

**HABITAT:** Terrestrial. Grasslands, savanna, and also near swamps and rivers.

**DESCRIPTION:** The white rhinoceros is larger and heavier than the black rhinoceros and can be readily identified by the hump on the back of its neck and its square-shaped upper lip. The head is carried low for grazing. The horns are longer and thinner, and can reach an astounding five plus feet in length. The ears are broad and have hairs on the edges. This rhinoceros can reach 13 feet in length and five and one half feet at the shoulders, and it weighs upward of 5000 pounds, making it the third largest living land animal behind the elephant and the hippopotamus.

**BEHAVIOR:** The white rhinoceros is less aggressive than the black rhinoceros. It rarely charges, and males only engage in combat during the mating season. The males are usually solitary, but females with calves may be seen in groups. It feeds on grass, grazing with its broad, square lip. It, too, needs water daily, and often wallows at length in water or mud. It moves slowly and customarily uses the same tracks and paths, active both during the day and at night. It has poor sight, but has acute hearing.

**REPRODUCTION:** The female has one calf every 3 to 4 years after an estimated 18 month gestation.

**Note:** This is one of the most endangered species in the world since only about 4000 still survive. Its numbers are remaining steady in only a few

game reserves in South Africa. The major threat to the white rhino is, of course, humans poaching for the horns.