# Joe Rogan discusses ethical implications of resurrecting dire wolves



On a recent episode of his podcast, Joe Rogan engaged in a discussion with Ben Lamm, CEO of Colossal Biosciences, which has made headlines for successfully birthing three dire wolves. This development marks a significant moment in genetic engineering and conservation efforts, as the dire wolf went extinct approximately 12,500 years ago. The animals, named Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi—after characters from the HBO series Game of Thrones—were created using advanced DNA extraction and editing techniques, featuring a full reassembly of their genetic code.

During the podcast, Rogan posed a question that has sparked ethical dialogues in the scientific community, asking Lamm about the implications of humans "playing God" in these initiatives. He expressed curiosity over the moral ramifications of intruding upon natural processes to create new life. Lamm responded by noting that humanity has already exercised unchecked influence over the environment, contributing to biodiversity loss through overfishing, overhunting, and deforestation. He stated, "We overfish the ocean, we overhunt something," suggesting that the concept of 'playing God' could extend to human practices that cause ecological harm.

Colossal's endeavour to resurrect extinct species has raised both interest and concern among experts. The company's method involved comparing the dire wolf's genome with that of its closest living relative, the grey wolf. This comparison enabled Colossal's scientists to identify specific gene variants before manipulating the grey wolf genome to mirror that of the dire wolf. The process included creating a viable egg cell, which was subsequently implanted in a surrogate mother.

The pups are now five months old, and while they exhibit potentially natural behaviours such as hunting and socialising, Lamm confirmed that there are no plans to reintroduce them into the wild. Instead, he referred to the project as a potential "start of something bigger," with plans to create additional specimens. He described the dire wolf pups as having a "beautiful, mane-like quality" and noted their unique fur texture reminiscent of polar bears.

While Colossal Biosciences promotes its work as an effort to rectify historical human-induced extinction events, criticisms have emerged regarding the feasibility and ethical implications of de-extinction. Researchers from the University of Cambridge have voiced concerns, arguing that recreating lost species may lead to genetic complications and welfare issues in the newly birthed animals. Dr Patrick Weaber from Bern University stated, "De-extinction is fascinating but risks creating dangerous illusions," emphasising that attention should be directed towards habitat preservation rather than the resurrection of extinct species.

The debate also extends to the broader implications of such projects. Critics such as conservation scientist Nitik Sekar have expressed scepticism that the focus on de-extinction could distract from pressing conservation needs. Additionally, the potential for newly-created species to thrive in their former habitats amid current environmental challenges has been questioned, with experts like Karl Flessa remarking on concerns that the animals might face a second extinction.

Regardless of the debate, Colossal Biosciences has secured significant funding, amounting to $435 million since its inception in 2021, to support its ambitious goals, which include bringing back other extinct species like the woolly mammoth and the dodo. The company's mission statement asserts a responsibility for humanity to restore lost species and heal the environment, aiming for meaningful contributions to ecological restoration and climate change mitigation.

As discussions continue, the implications of de-extincting species like the dire wolf are being closely monitored within both scientific and public spheres, highlighting the intersection of technology, ethics, and conservation in the modern age.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)