

Stereotypes

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Q400

Goals

- What are stereotypes and where do they occur?
- When do stereotypes occur?
- Why do they occur? Are they bad?
- Cognitive Approach
- What is being done about these behaviors?

Stereotypies

- Stereotypies are categorized by behavior patterns that are repetitive and serve no apparent goal or function (Mason, 1991).
- Often found in humans with mental handicaps/ disorders.
- Have long been noted in a variety of captive settings.

When do stereotypies occur?

- One variable that appears to be directly related to stereotypic activity is the timing of food events.
- Stereotypic activity often peaks immediately prior and following a large feeding. The peak is usually species specific.

Why do they Occur and are they Bad?

- Stereotypies have been positively correlated with a number of conditions (age, food schedules, estrus periods, settings etc)
- General consensus is that these activities reflect poorly on welfare of animals.

Effects

- Increased cortisol levels have been observed in animals that engage in frequent stereotypic behavior.
- These prolonged high levels of cortisol have been associated with severe neurological impairments and cognitive deficits.
- Can also lead to abnormalities in dendritic reshaping process of hippocampus, amygdala, and ventral prefrontal cortex.

Cognitive Approach

- Related to mental disorders
e.g. Tourette's syndrome
- Described as a failure to express knowledge possessed in the behavioral responses made.
- Impaired performance on extinction learning.

What is being done about these behaviors?

- Many enrichment efforts--species specific.
- Food schedule experiments.
- More naturalistic enclosures to promote more naturalistic behaviors.

Conclusion

- Stereotypes are seen as a negative- in both animals and humans.
- They are seen as a product of different things in different areas, but are in many ways dealt with in the same manner.
- More research is needed to find the “cause” of these behaviors, but current research shows that they can be effected by variant food schedules.

References

- Fernandez, E.J., and Timberlake, W. (2004, May). Fixed-time food schedules and their effects on activity patterns in two adult polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*). Paper presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis Conference, Boston, MA.
- Mason, G.J. (1991). Stereotypies: A critical review. *Animal Behaviour*, 41, 1015-1037.
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