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Abnormal behavior and the self-regulation of motivational state.

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Abstract

Although most abnormal behavior, including all stereotypies, indicate poor welfare, some that occurs in rare situations is functional and does not indicate a negative situation. There is a wide range of abnormal behaviors that occur in conditions where the animal's needs are not met and these can be valuable welfare indicators but should never be called 'vices'. Some behaviors, both normal and abnormal, can be used as motivation-modifying methods. They affect subsequent behavior and physiology, including feelings and emotions. The feelings and emotions in turn affect future behavior. Such complex mechanisms are a part of the regulatory functioning of sentient animals. The existence of these mechanisms helps to explain some abnormal behaviors and their consequences.

Highlights:

- Abnormal behavior is defined and three categories explained.
- The term vice is unscientific and should not be used.
- Behavior may be used to modify motivational state and help in coping.
- Consider mechanisms for regulating motivation, behavior and physiology when explaining abnormal behavior.

Key words: abnormal behavior, stereotypy, animal welfare, motivation, cognition, feelings, emotion,

1. Abnormal behavior

A definition of abnormal behavior is *behavior which differs in pattern, frequency or context from that which is shown by most members of the species in conditions that allow a full range of behavior* (Fraser and Broom 1990, Broom and Fraser 2015). Although it is the animal's behavior which is described, the identification of abnormality is human. In order to recognize that behavior is abnormal, the person observing must be familiar with the range of normal behavior of that species and this familiarity depends upon level of knowledge. The knowledge should not just be that of the animal's movements but also of how often they occur and of the circumstances of occurrence.

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