

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0168-1591(16)30352-5
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.applanim.2016.11.012>
Reference: APPLAN 4367

To appear in: *APPLAN*

Received date: 23-8-2016
Revised date: 24-11-2016
Accepted date: 27-11-2016

Please cite this article as: Düpjan, Sandra, Stracke, Jenny, Tuchscherer, Armin, Puppe, Birger, An improved design for the spatial judgement task in domestic pigs. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2016.11.012>

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An improved design for the spatial judgement task in domestic pigs

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Highlights:

- spatial judgement tasks can be used to assess affective valence in animals
- current experimental designs for pigs need to be improved
- we developed a spatial go/no-go task with mild punishment and partial reinforcement
- pigs could be tested repeatedly and showed graded responses to graded probe cues
- this experimental design is suitable for future studies on affective valence in pigs

Abstract

Public concern for farm animal welfare calls for reliable scientific tools to measure it. Measuring cognitive bias, i.e., the influence of affective states on cognitive processing, has gained importance during recent years. The one most often adapted experimental design to test cognitive bias in non-human animals is the spatial judgement task, where animals must judge a goal box/pot based on its location. First, they learn to discriminate between a positively reinforced and a negatively reinforced

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