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Behavioral Economics in Rats

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Poster Presentation P40

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS IN RATS

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Risk aversion, or a tendency to prefer a more certain but smaller reward to a larger but less certain reward, even if the average payoff for the larger reward is higher, is a quality which most individuals, both human and animal, possess to different degrees. The purpose of this study is to examine how factors such as recent physical exertion and the expected value of the reward may affect the degree to which rats show risk aversion in their choice behavior. This will be studied by putting rats into a Y maze and allowing them to choose between a side which has a two-thirds chance of containing food pellets versus another side which has a one-third chance of containing twice as many food pellets, and observing whether or not their choices between the two sides are affected by having to run in a running wheel before making the choice or by changing the expected value of the reward.