

Visual Aide for Creating Enrichment Items

Enrichment devices are administered to laboratory animals to reduce abnormal behaviors and to promote species typical behaviors (e.g., foraging and nest building). With a diverse collection of species that require numerous enrichment options, a laboratory enrichment schedule can become difficult to manage. In order to promote the diversity of enrichment items and to prevent the distribution of inappropriate enrichment items, animal care staff must be aware of the proper enrichment items to use for particular species. A visual aid in the form of a poster depicts the available options for enrichment. To create an effective means of communicating which enrichment items were appropriate, a 3' x 4.5' poster was designed to illustrate appropriate enrichment combinations for foxes, raccoons and skunks. Eleven enrichment items (e.g., kongs, paper bags, rubber bones, etc.) were distributed along the top of the poster and the suitable food items (e.g., honey, dog biscuits, sardines, etc.) were placed underneath each enrichment item. The allowable combinations were color coded in order to highlight the association between a particular enrichment item and the accompanying food choice. Instructions for interpreting the poster and a predetermined weekly schedule were created and attached to the poster. With several combinations represented in a visual format, animal care staff personnel are equipped with the ability to see the variety of enrichment options available per species. Visual depictions of the appropriate enrichment items may increase the diversity of an enrichment schedule by illustrating the possible enrichment choices. Similar posters may be created and used for multiple species; thus, enabling animal care staff to follow an enrichment schedule that offers variety and species-appropriate enrichment choices.