

Relieving Stereotypes through Nonconventional Housing

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Abstract

Animals are generally housed together with conspecifics in research settings. As studies end, social animals may be left without conspecifics and demonstrate signs of stress, boredom and stereotypical behavior. Rocky, a nervous hound, arrived recently and was housed alone as the only dog in the facility. His caretaker was concerned because Rocky whined incessantly when alone. The caretaker spent as much time with him as possible, but had other animals to care for so Rocky spent most of his day whining. We asked our veterinarian for permission to house Rocky and a gregarious pig named Suzie across from each other in the same room. Suzie was the single remaining pig from another study and was showing atypical signs of inactivity. The veterinarian approved the arrangement and Rocky and Suzie began interacting immediately. Suzie went to the front of Rocky's run and nudged the wire with her snout. Instead of cowering in the back, Rocky walked to the front of the run to investigate. He regularly stood and watched Suzie in her pen foraging in her hay for treats. Rocky never whined again in Suzie's company. Our staff was delighted to provide a solution that relieved stress in both animal models.