

Underchallenged when not at test: Boredom in laboratory mice

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Boredom is an emotional state that usually relates to humans when an individual has nothing to do, is not interested in their surroundings, and feels that life is dull and tedious. I argue that this state also very aptly describes the life of many laboratory mice which are housed in small barren cages with not much to do. There is increasing evidence that common symptoms related to boredom which are found in humans also apply for animals. For example, barbering behaviour has been recently related to Trichotillomania, a human disorder reportedly triggered by boredom. In addition other abnormal behaviours like stereotypies and the 'inactive but awake' phenomenon are commonly related to a lack of stimulation in laboratory animals. This renders boredom measurable in animal experiments and thus makes it possible to analyse the severity as well as to investigate possible cures.