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Interpretation of ambiguous spatial stimuli in cats

G Tami*†‡, C Torre§, M Compagnucci§ and X Manteca‡

† Carrer de les Arts 16, Corbera de Llobregat, Barcelona 08757, Spain
‡ Department de Ciencia Animal y de los Alimentos, Facultat de Veterinària, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona 08193, Spain
§ Affinity Petcare, Pl Xavier Cugat, 2-Edificio D, 3a Planta, St Cugat Nord 08174, Spain
* Contact for correspondence and requests for reprints: kaleb39@hotmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this paper was to develop a protocol to study the interpretation of ambiguous stimuli in cats as a measure of welfare. Ten cats were trained to discriminate between a rewarded position (R) and an unrewarded one (U), as measured by the approach latency for each position. After discrimination, they were exposed to three ambiguous unrewarded positions (R-near, R/U-equidistant, U-near) distributed at intermediate points between R and U. Approach latency increased as increasing the distance from the rewarded position: latencies to approach R and R-near were significantly shorter than for R/U-equidistant, U-near and U. This protocol should be further studied to assess its effectiveness in highlighting differences according to the welfare level of individual cats.

Keywords: *animal welfare, cat, cat cognition, cognitive bias, interpretation of ambiguous stimuli, spatial location*