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Training as enrichment: A critical review

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Abstract

Husbandry training and environmental enrichment are both important advancements associated with current behavioural welfare practices. Additionally, the use of training procedures has been proposed as a form of enrichment, with the implication that training can produce beneficial behavioural welfare results. This paper examines the concept of training as enrichment through three distinct ways training procedures could enrich: (i) training facilitates enrichment usage; (ii) training modifies interactions, conspecific or otherwise; and (iii) training expands behavioural repertoires. Within each category, the paper focuses on past research that provides empirical support for training functioning as enrichment, as well as related areas of research that provide additional evidence. Previous studies support the claim that training is enriching, with additional research necessary to better understand how prevalent and under what conditions training procedures function as enrichment. Future training research should examine these potential enrichment effects, including methodology that allows for comparisons to traditional enrichment, the use of welfare diversity/variability indices, and the effects of learning on trainers and trainees alike.

Keywords: animal welfare, enrichment, husbandry, learning, positive reinforcement, training