

THE ENRICHING EFFECTS OF FORAGING TASKS IN RESEARCH WITH CAPTIVE ANIMALS

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Offering foraging opportunities to captive animals is a well-established method for supporting psychological well-being. Researchers capitalize on the inherently motivating foraging task to study behavior and cognition in nonhumans, such as decision-making, spatial cognition, motor coordination and social learning (among many others). Foraging tasks vary according to the species of interest and restrictions imposed by the captive setting, thus ranging from search tasks over large areas to small objects that animals manipulate directly. In this presentation, we discuss the value of a foraging apparatus that we designed specifically for capuchin monkeys (*Cebus spp.*) as an enrichment and research tool. The apparatus is constructed of acrylic, hangs outside the cage, and requires two successive actions to acquire food. We discuss how the apparatus was used for behavioral research and how subjects responded to the apparatus. Additionally, we present a conceptual framework for assessing the efficacy of foraging enrichment in promoting psychological well-being in captive animals. Given that consistent and species-appropriate foraging enrichment reduces behavioral signs of stress in captive animals (e.g., Bayne, et al., 1991) and that distraction reduces anxiety in humans undergoing stressful experiences (e.g., Bonk, et al., 2001), we hypothesize that offering a moderately challenging foraging task immediately following a non-routine stressor (such as brief capture) may help animals cope with that stressor more effectively than not offering anything at all. Results from such research may influence when caretakers provide certain types of enrichment to best support their animals' psychological health.

Keywords: foraging, enrichment, psychological well-being, stress