

Animal Behavior

Innate and Learned Behaviors



Behavior

- An **activity** or action that helps an organism survive in its environment.
- **Behavior** can be thought of as the way an animal acts.
- Blinking, eating, running, walking, flying, sleeping - are all examples of animal behavior.



*Animals behave in certain ways for **four basic reasons***

- to find **food**
- to **interact** in social groups
- to avoid **predators**
- to **reproduce**



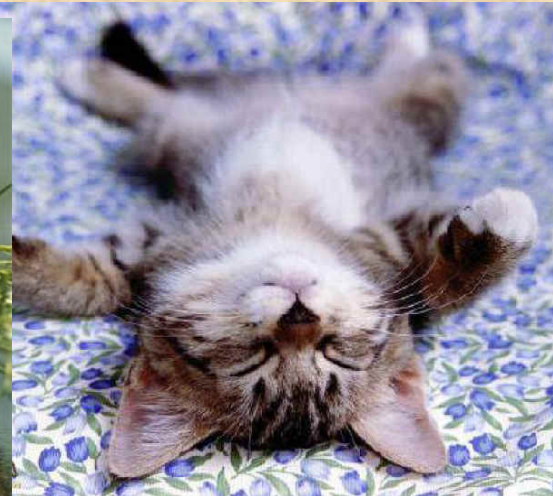
Stimulus

- A behavior comes in response to a **stimulus**.
- A **stimulus** is any change in the environment that affects the activity of an organism or what causes an animal to act in a certain way.

Examples: Animals might respond to changes in heat, light, sound, odor, etc.

Stimuli

Stimuli may include the sight of food, the sound of a potential predator, or the smell of a mate. Stimuli may also include such daily events as nightfall and seasonal events such as decreasing temperatures. Animals **respond** to stimuli.



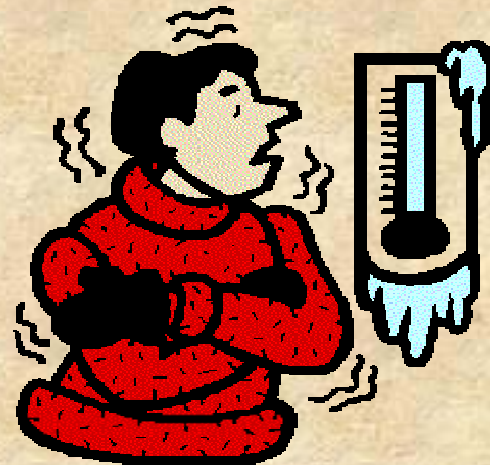
Innate Behavior

- Meerkats are small mammals of southern Africa that live in burrows dug into the soil. Each morning, Meerkats emerge from their burrows and line up to take in the warmth of the sun. This behavior is a Meerkat ritual.
- We call such rituals **innate behaviors**.



Innate behaviors

- Innate behaviors are not learned, you are born with them.
- The ability to swim, for example, is an innate behavior of whales and fish.
- Suckling to get milk is an innate behavior of mammals.
- Blinking, breathing, and shivering when cold are all innate behaviors.



What other innate behaviors can you think of?

- Jot down your ideas



Migration

- **Migration** is an innate behavior.
- Migration is the seasonal movement of animals from one place to another. This behavior allows the animals to take advantage of resources like food or water when they run low in another location.



Hibernation

- **Hibernation** is an innate behavior.
- Hibernation is a resting state that helps animals survive the winter. During hibernation a warm-blooded animal like a ground squirrel slows down its heart rate and breathing rate.



Learned behavior

- There are some behaviors that animals are not born with. The behaviors are **learned**.
- Animal behaviors are learned from **observations** or **experience**. Young animals often learn behavior from watching their **parents**.
- Young lions learn to hunt by watching their mothers capture and kill other animals.

Learned behaviors

- Monkey mothers much teach their babies what leaves are safe to eat and which are not.
- You had to **learn** to walk and talk.



What other learned behaviors can you think of?

- Jot down your ideas.



Cooperative behavior

- Some animals show cooperative behavior to help them accomplish a task. This means that a group of animals might work together.
- For example, wolves hunt in packs because they are more likely to capture prey that way.



- Musk oxen form a circle when approached by a pack of wolves. By huddling together with their powerful horns facing outward, they protect their bodies from being attacked by the wolves.



Mating behavior

- Much animal behavior is focused on finding a **mate**. Many birds have elaborate courtship displays and mating dances.
- It is usually the **male** birds that have colorful feathers and impressive dances.



Plant behavior

Plant's can't move like animals can, but they will still respond to a stimulus (**change** in the environment). A plant's growth in response to a stimuli is called **tropism**. Plants respond to stimuli such as gravity, light and touch.



Phototropism

- If you place a plant near the window, you will notice that, eventually, most of the leaves will be facing the sun. This change in growth is called **phototropism**

