Animal Behaviour
Habituation, Animal Learning, and Conditioning

Post 16

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the session:

✓ All students will know what innate, learned, imprinting and imitation are, as well as the difference between classical and operant conditioning

✓ Most students will know how training methods can be used to overcome certain innate behaviours and understand how training methods are used to allow keepers to improve the care given

✓ Some students will be able to successfully use the theory discussed in practice to train animals

Session Outline:

The session starts with defining what behaviour is before focusing on innate behaviour first. Innate behaviours are discussed and defined using animal examples, such as hibernation and egg hatching, and how innate behaviours can be an obstacle to training. Habituation is talked about and how it is used as a basic training method. Imprinting is also discussed which leads into conditioning, looking at classical and operant conditioning. The training process is then discussed looking at how positive reinforcement is used at Colchester Zoo to train the animals. The students will then have the opportunity to train some of Colchester Zoo’s goats using what has been discussed in practice. Other animals are used throughout the session to reinforce the discussed theory.

Curriculum Links

Psychology
- Distinguish between an unconditioned response and a conditioned response.
- Understand how learning can be achieved through observation and imitation
- Describe the role of reinforcement and punishment