

This Week's Citation Classic

Ropartz P. The relation between olfactory stimulation and aggressive behaviour in mice. *Anim. Behav.* 16:97-100, 1968. [Lab Psychophysiol., Univ. Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, France]

In order to demonstrate the likely role of olfactory cues in the aggressive behaviour in mice, the level of aggression of male mice was measured in three situations: (a) natural conditions, (b) after the males had been artificially scented, and (c) after removing their olfactory bulbs. [The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited over 120 times since 1968.]

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"Since 1966, I had been working on olfaction and social behaviour in domestic mice. It seemed to me reasonable to suspect the role of olfactory cues in the aggressive behaviour of male mice. I was sincerely amazed that nobody had had this idea before me!

"Two techniques were used: the first one, the removal of olfactory bulbs, was not an original one; it was used in rats, for example, by Karli's team in Strasbourg.¹ It was in this laboratory that I learned this surgical method.

"The second one was more original. I had to find an artificial scent in order to mask the natural odours of male mice. As this artificial scent had to be vaporized on each encounter every day, I was afraid of the odour which would be expanded in my experimental room (it was also my bureau and I possess a 'good nose!') I decided to buy a good French perfume for the mice as well as for my nose.

"I went to a perfumer in Strasbourg and asked for 'Diorling' by Dior. The young sales woman blushed and glanced at me as if I were funny. I had told her: 'I would like to buy a very good perfume: it is for mice (in French mice is one of the nicknames for young girls)...for mice à poils (in French à poils means with fur and à poil means naked.)' She called for the patron!

"A few months later, when the experiments were finished, I offered the remainder of the perfume to my wife. I don't know why but she did not accept!

"I encountered some difficulties in publishing this paper in an international journal. This is frequently the case when a paper comes from France. The referees didn't find any scientific failure. But, they did find errors in my usage of English. They didn't know that the translation had been done by an English ethologist! Additional work in this field appeared in *Olfaction and Taste*.²

"Finally if this paper has been highly cited, it is perhaps because it was the evidence of an evident phenomenon!"

1. Karli P & Vergnes M. Rôle du rhinencéphale dans le contrôle du comportement d'agression interspécifique rat-souris. *J. Physiol.* -Paris 55:272-3, 1963.

2. Ropartz P & Haug M. Olfaction and aggressive behaviour in female mice. (Denton D A & Coghlan J P, eds.) *Olfaction and taste*. New York: Academic Press, 1975. Vol. 5. p. 411-12.