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Diet-induced diabetes

Research scientists are increasingly using minipigs to study diabetes. Chen Hua and colleagues evaluated diabetes susceptibility in three strains of minipigs by feeding them a high-sucrose, high-fat diet for 8 months. They found that two strains were relatively susceptible to diet-induced type 2 diabetes. These results provide a foundation for genetic analyses in minipigs with varying susceptibilities to diet-induced type 2 diabetes.

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Mice with age-dependent glucose tolerance

Various animal models of diabetes are relevant to the disease in humans. Yellow KK-*A^y* mice are widely used as genetic models for type 2 diabetes. Toney *et al.* found that as KK-*A^y* mice aged, their glucose tolerance significantly improved. Their results highlight the importance of age in animal models of human diseases. The authors suggest that studies using mouse models of type 2 diabetes should be done while mice are relatively young.

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Exploiting the fine-branch niche

Byron and colleagues developed two structures to simulate a natural arboreal setting known as the fine-branch niche. They exposed laboratory mice to the smaller structure for limited amounts of time and permanently housed another group of mice in the larger structure. Mice in both groups succeeded at quadrupedal climbing, suggesting that similarly sized pre-primates could potentially have exploited this niche. Because the mice appeared unaggressive and remained healthy, the authors suggest that others could use similar structures as forms of enrichment for laboratory mice.

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Automated monitoring of rodent behavior

To evaluate potential pharmaceutical treatments for obesity and diabetes, researchers study feeding behavior in rodents. Furlano *et al.* developed a rodent behavior monitoring system that simultaneously measures food intake, water consumption and motor activity. This system substantially increased throughput in rat food intake studies and improved user ergonomics and safety. The authors describe the features of their system and propose that others could create similar systems or adapt certain features of this system to fit existing rodent caging set-ups.

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