An animal model of another animal

Large organisms can be complex, which can make understanding the intricacies of their health and the diseases they can come down with a challenge. Animal models help researchers ask the important questions about the underlying genetic, cellular, and molecular mechanisms involved. The animal model needs to be simple and easy to work with, while translationally relevant to the larger organism at hand.

That's true when the animal is intended to model a human...or, another animal. In this month's Technology Feature, we dive into the world of corals—animals facing an uncertain future that are challenging to raise and study in the lab. The race is on to develop an animal model that can help the field better understand and ultimately conserve coral reefs.

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A day in the life

Every day, researchers, animal care technicians, and veterinarians work with any number of different animals in the lab: mammals and fishes; vertebrates and invertebrates; 'model' species and less-conventional creatures. Whatever the animal, why it's been chosen for a particular line of research and how it's worked with and cared for are important details. Publications that push research on towards the clinic may be the end result, but the day-to-day can be fascinating too.

We've invited members of the animal research community to share what it's like working with their animals. Our first Comment comes from Jeanna Wheeler, a research scientist at the Seattle Institute for Biomedical and Clinical Research whose charges span two communities: that of the mouse, and that of the worm.

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