

## A REINFORCER FOR CATS

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The cat is an excellent subject for physiological investigations. It is small enough that it can be maintained in modestly sized quarters and yet its anatomy is sufficiently large that many types of physiological intervention can be accomplished with relative ease. However, the cat has long been neglected as a subject for behavioral investigations because of the absence of a reinforcer which will result in reasonably uniform performance from day to day in an individual cat and which will be reinforcing to a majority of cats. This paper describes a reinforcer which satisfies both of these requirements.

The reinforcer consists of a smooth paste composed of ground fish, flour and sweet cream. It is based on a Scandinavian food called *fiskefars*. Any firm, white fish, such as cod, halibut, flounder, *etc.*, may be used. The fish should be finely ground and mixed with about 1 liter of sweet cream or evaporated milk per kg of fish. The resultant mixture should be a semi-fluid which just barely flows. If the mixture is too dry, more cream or milk may be added. If it is too fluid, several table-

spoons of flour should be added until the desired consistency is reached. Large quantities of the paste may be prepared at one time and kept in a freezer until needed. However, following thawing, the paste should be placed in a blender or mixer to reconstitute any liquid which may separate out as ice crystals. The paste may be dispensed by the conventional motor-operated dipper.

At present, 18 randomly selected cats have been studied on a number of reinforcement schedules including fixed ratio, temporally spaced responding, and classical respondent conditioning. No animals were discarded because of an inadequate reinforcer.

Each reinforcement was 0.5 gm and the cats were maintained at 80% of normal body weight. Their behavior was quite comparable to the performance of pigeons, rats and monkeys on similar schedules. Moreover, if the paste is the animals' sole source of food intake, an adult, male cat will consume 200 to 300 0.5 gm reinforcers before showing signs of satiation.