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Attracted by a magnet: Exploration behaviour of rodents in the presence of magnetic objects

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Innovative, fast and low-cost methodological approach, investigating an animal's exploration behaviour in the presence of magnetic objects, is presented. Particularly, the animal's ability to respond to magnetic stimuli is tested. We found consistent results for three rodent species, exploring a magnet significantly longer than a sham control. Biological meaning of the animal's longer stay at the magnet compared to the sham is discussed.
- The assay can be applied to create a reliable basis to apply more complex magnetobiological experiments.
- Furthermore, the assay offers the great potential to be used by other researchers, studying sensory ecology in general and magnetoreception in particular, as well.
- In our study, the assay was applied on rodents, but is suitable for diverse other taxa.
- It could be shown for the first time that naked mole-rats respond to magnetic stimuli, indicating the possible posession of a magnetic sense.

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