

Seasonal depression may affect hamsters

November 16 2005

An Ohio State University study suggests hamsters may suffer from symptoms of anxiety and depression during the dark days of winter, just as some humans.

OSU researchers found more symptoms of depression and anxiety in adult hamsters that were housed for weeks in conditions with limited daylight, as they would find in winter, when compared with hamsters who had days with longer daylight.

The research also examined whether hamsters that developed prenatally, and then were born during short days, were more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety as adults. The results for those tests suggest hamsters born in winter-like light conditions had increased depressive symptoms as adults.

Overall, the scientists said their research suggests the season during which the hamsters were born, their sex, and the changing of the seasons all might play a role in levels of depression and anxiety.

"These results in hamsters may provide some insight into the development of seasonal affective disorders in humans," said Randy Nelson, psychology professor and co-author of the study with Leah Pyter, an OSU doctoral student in neuroscience.

They presented their results Tuesday in Washington, D.C. during the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience.

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